

# Fighting in the Mountains and Among the People: Imperial Russian and Early Soviet Population-Centric Counterinsurgency

A Monograph

by

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## **Abstract**

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This monograph examines the imperial Russian campaign to quell rebellion in the North Caucasus from 1801 to 1864 and the Bolshevik suppression of the Basmachi rebellion in Central Asia from 1919 to 1933. The Caucasian War and the Basmachi rebellion featured Muslim insurgent movements that exploited inaccessible mountain terrain and relied upon the local population for recruitment and support. The imperial Russians and Bolsheviks both struggled to adapt their civil and military operations to defeat an elusive enemy and establish control over a diverse and fractured society. The analysis tests the effectiveness of key principles found in population-centric counterinsurgency theory and doctrine in the imperial Russian and Bolshevik counterinsurgent operations. The evidence suggests that the synchronization of military and nonmilitary operations through unity of effort contributed to Russian and Bolshevik victory by isolating the insurgent forces from the local population. The analysis also identifies significant risks and costs associated with employing a population-centric approach to counterinsurgency.

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## Introduction

The armed forces are but one of the many instruments of the counterinsurgent, and what is better than the political power to harness the nonmilitary instruments, to see that appropriations come at the right time to consolidate the military work, that political and social reforms follow through?

-David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*

The September 11th terrorist attacks against the United States precipitated lengthy wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Following brief periods of conventional warfare, both conflicts transitioned into extended stages of unconventional warfare. The rise of insurgents with close ties to the local population in Afghanistan and Iraq challenged the conventionally oriented US military, and forced a reconsideration of US Army doctrine. Officers examined past counterinsurgency campaigns to determine the proper way to adapt to the new threat. Under the leadership of the Commanding General of the Combined Arms Center, Lieutenant General David Petraeus, the US Army created a population-centric counterinsurgency doctrine in 2006 that emphasized the integration of military and nonmilitary operations.<sup>1</sup> The US Army's new doctrine drew upon the counterinsurgency theories of French officers in the Algerian Civil War, and diverse historical examples from the British in Malay to the Soviets in Afghanistan to inform the US Army's approach to the Afghan and Iraqi insurgencies.<sup>2</sup> Despite the breadth of historical analysis of past "small wars," officers and students of military affairs largely ignored two examples of counterinsurgencies with striking similarities to the United States' post-September 11th conflicts.

The imperial Russian Caucasian campaigns from 1801 to 1864 and the Soviet suppression of the Basmachi rebellion from 1918 to 1933 provide excellent case studies to test

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<sup>1</sup> Michael R. Gordon, "Military Hones a New Strategy on Insurgency," *New York Times*, October 5, 2006, accessed January 3, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/05/washington/05doctrine.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Bergen, "How Petraeus Changed the US Military," CNN, last modified November 11, 2012, accessed January 3, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/11/10/opinion/bergen-petraeus-legacy>.

the counterinsurgency principles codified in the 2006 publication of Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Both conflicts pitted predominately-ethnic Russian forces against Muslim insurgent movements that relied upon the support of their local populations in largely inaccessible mountainous regions. The organization and doctrine of the imperial Russian and Soviet militaries centered on conventional warfare, and both armies struggled to adapt to the unconventional tactics of their adversaries. The Russians and the Bolsheviks each enjoyed significant military and economic advantages over their enemies, but often failed to translate their superior might into tactical success.<sup>3</sup> The challenge of fighting small, elusive bands of insurgents spurred tactical innovations, and both armies adopted new tactics and techniques over the course of their respective conflicts. Tactical reform played a critical role in the eventual Russian and Soviet success; however, military victories alone did not deny the Caucasian insurgents and the Basmachi the support of the local population. The imperial Russian and Bolshevik approach to combining military and nonmilitary operations differed significantly, but both forces eventually realized that nonmilitary factors played a critical role in the insurgencies that they faced. The Caucasian War and the suppression of the Basmachi uprising demonstrated that synchronizing military and nonmilitary operations through unity of effort contributed positively to a successful counterinsurgency campaign.

In recent years, military officers and security affairs experts examined a diverse range of insurgencies to test and justify the population-centric approach toward counterinsurgency. Some notable studies included the Soviet War in Afghanistan, the Vietnam War, the British suppression of the Malay insurgency, and the Indonesian counterinsurgency in East Timor. Despite the extensiveness of research on past counterinsurgencies, the Russian and Soviet

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<sup>3</sup> Robert F. Baumann, *Leavenworth Papers, Number 20: Russian-Soviet Unconventional Wars in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1993), 211-212.

counterinsurgencies in the Caucasus and Central Asia are relatively unknown in the west.<sup>4</sup> However, the Caucasian War and Basmachi rebellion provide excellent case studies to test the effectiveness of combining military and nonmilitary operations in a counterinsurgency campaign. Both conflicts bare broad structural similarities to current operations in Afghanistan. The imperial Russian and Soviet forces struggled to suppress primarily native, Muslim insurgencies that capitalized on inaccessible terrain and exert effective governance over a fractious, traditionalist society.<sup>5</sup> Despite the similarities between current American-led operations in Afghanistan and the Caucasian War and Basmachi suppression, significant differences also exist.

The imperial Russians and Soviets sought to establish lasting control over the territories where they fought and integrate them into a larger state governed from St. Petersburg or Moscow. Conversely, the international coalition that toppled the Taliban and fought the subsequent insurgency attempted to establish and transition power to a moderate native government.<sup>6</sup> The historical context of each conflict along with the political, cultural, and technological nature of the insurgent and counterinsurgent forces further differentiates each conflict and confuses simple comparisons between current operations in Afghanistan and the Caucasian War and Basmachi suppression. However, testing the precepts of US Army doctrine against past conflicts that differ from contemporary operations allows the US Army to determine if its doctrine is truly generalizable. Future operations are unlikely to mirror current operations, and a doctrine that only applies to the contemporary operating environment cannot be a “guide to action” for the future force.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, assessing the population-centric assumptions of US counterinsurgency

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 211-212.

<sup>6</sup> “US Formally Ends the War in Afghanistan,” CBS News, last updated December 18, 2014, accessed January 26, 2015, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/america-formally-ends-the-war-in-afghanistan>.

<sup>7</sup> Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 1.

doctrine, particularly the combining of military and nonmilitary operations, against the Caucasian War and Basmachi suppression tests the generalizability of US Army doctrine while providing the opportunity to identify continuities between past counterinsurgency campaigns and contemporary operations.

This monograph will review the available literature on the Caucasian War and the suppression of Basmachi rebellion to summarize the current scholarship on the two conflicts and identify common themes in the literature. This analysis will also include a review US Army counterinsurgency doctrine and its theoretical forbearers to demonstrate the centrality of military and nonmilitary coordination to contemporary American operations. Following the literature review, the methodology used to test the importance of combined military and nonmilitary operations will be explained. Two case studies, the Caucasian War and the Basmachi suppression, will be analyzed through the lens of US Army counterinsurgency doctrine. Finally, a conclusion will summarize the findings and provide recommendations based upon those findings.

## Literature Review

### Theoretical Literature Review

The lengthy insurgencies that followed brief periods of conventional warfare during the post-September 11th wars in Afghanistan and Iraq spurred doctrinal adaptation in the US Army. The US military and its coalition allies employed a combination of local proxy forces and Special Operations Forces, supported by airstrikes and a small number of conventional forces, to overthrow the Taliban regime and pursue Al Qaeda operatives in 2001 and 2002.<sup>8</sup> Shortly thereafter in 2003, the American-led coalition rapidly deposed Saddam Hussein of Iraq in a campaign that demonstrated the US military's superiority in firepower and mobility.<sup>9</sup> Despite overwhelming success against the organized forces of each regime, the emergence of anti-coalition insurgencies challenged the US military in both Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>10</sup> The US Army struggled to adapt the doctrine and training that delivered easy victories during the conventional phases of the war to the fight against irregular enemies that concealed themselves among the local population. In 2006, Lieutenant General David Petraeus gathered military historians and experts in counterinsurgent warfare to update US Army's counterinsurgency doctrine.

The 2006 version of FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* called upon past counterinsurgent theorists and the experience of soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan to create a population-centric doctrine on counterinsurgency. Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl, the author of the influential book on counterinsurgency in Vietnam and Malaysia, *How to Eat Soup with a Knife*, and an Iraq War veteran, along with Lieutenant Colonel Conrad Crane, the director of the Army War College's

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History From Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 295-309.

<sup>9</sup> John R. Ballard, David W. Lamm, and John K. Wood, *From Kabul to Baghdad and Back: The US at War in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 82-87.

<sup>10</sup> Ballard, Lamm, and Wood, 281.

military history institute, played leading roles in drafting FM 3-24.<sup>11</sup> The historical perspective of the field manual's chief authors was evident in the new doctrine. Nagl explained that in FM 3-24 "[w]e are codifying the best practices of previous counterinsurgency campaigns and the lessons we have learned from Iraq and Afghanistan to help our forces succeed in the current fight and prepare for the future."<sup>12</sup> Despite the historical grounding of the field manual, the authors also integrated the experiences of the post-Cold War Army. Crane described the new doctrine as a "bottom-up change," and argued that "young soldiers who had been through Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and now Iraq and Afghanistan understood why we need to do this."<sup>13</sup> The 2006 edition of FM 3-24 was a synthesis of historical study and practical US Army experience, but the authors of the new doctrine drew heavily upon the insights of the French soldier and intellectual David Galula for its theoretical foundations.<sup>14</sup>

Galula fought in the imperial French rearguard conflicts that followed the Second World War. He drew upon his experiences in the wars of national liberation in Indochina and Algeria to develop a theory of counterinsurgency that identified the support of the indigenous population as the source of an insurgency's power and because of this theory he prioritized population control over tactical engagements with insurgents.<sup>15</sup> Galula believed "the support of the population is as necessary for the counterinsurgent as for the insurgent."<sup>16</sup> He argued that the conventional superiority of counterinsurgent forces made clearing an area of insurgents relatively easy, but that

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<sup>11</sup> Gordon, "Military Hones a New Strategy on Insurgency."

<sup>12</sup> John Nagl quoted in Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Conrad Crane quoted in Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Bergen, "How Petraeus Changed the US Military."

<sup>15</sup> Robert R. Bowie, forward to *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1964), v-vi.

<sup>16</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1964), 74.

only garnering the support of the local population prevented the return of the enemy.<sup>17</sup> Galula also believed that the ease of initiating insurgent movements prevented counterinsurgents from achieving decisive victory through military means alone. Even if the counterinsurgents destroyed an insurgent force or its political party another movement could easily take its place; therefore, victory in counterinsurgent warfare required “permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population, isolation not enforced upon the population but maintained by and with the population.”<sup>18</sup> Galula established the local population as the primary objective of a counterinsurgency campaign, but recognized that isolating insurgents from the population required a combined effort from civilian and military authorities.

The 2006 edition of FM 3-24 mirrored Galula’s emphasis on the civilian population in counterinsurgency operations. The authors of the field manual assumed that US counterinsurgency campaigns would be conducted on foreign soil and identified the host-nation (HN) government as the key to degrading popular support for insurgencies. The field manual stated that “[t]he primary objective of any COIN [counterinsurgency] operation is to foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government.”<sup>19</sup> An effective and legitimate government encouraged citizens to “assist it more actively” and “marginalize and stigmatize the insurgents.”<sup>20</sup> Given the importance of the host-nation government and the local population to the counterinsurgency campaign, FM 3-24 echoed Galula’s call for integration of military and civilian efforts. The field manual contended that “[t]he integration of civilian and military efforts

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 77

<sup>19</sup> Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 1-21.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 1-23.

is crucial to successful COIN operations” and “[a]ll efforts focus on supporting the local population and HN government.”<sup>21</sup>

### Conceptual Literature Review

Three conceptual lenses will be employed to analyze the Caucasian War and the Basmachi rebellion. The three concepts: nonmilitary operations in support of counterinsurgency, unity of effort, and counterinsurgent success are key components of population-centric counterinsurgency theory. Using these concepts as interpretive lenses, the analysis will test the efficacy of key principles of US counterinsurgency doctrine in the case studies.

Population-centric counterinsurgency places vital importance on nonmilitary operations designed to improve governance and isolate the insurgency from the population. Galula recognized that nonmilitary operations played a crucial role in winning popular support and isolating the insurgent from the population. However, he did not focus on the development and humanitarian aid efforts that many contemporary observers equate with nonmilitary operations in a counterinsurgency. The creation of supportive political organizations and counterinsurgent political, economic and administrative reforms dominated Galula’s vision of nonmilitary operations.<sup>22</sup> He believed that properly executed nonmilitary operations allowed the counterinsurgent to simultaneously win local support and erode the insurgent force’s justification for rebellion.<sup>23</sup> Galula argued that the centrality of nonmilitary operations justified establishing a staff function dedicated to political efforts equal in standing to operations, intelligence, and logistics in the counterinsurgent organization.<sup>24</sup> The importance of nonmilitary operations in

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 2-1.

<sup>22</sup> Galula, 77-79.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 101-103.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 90-92.

Galula's theory reflected his conviction that the population, not the insurgent, was the true objective in counterinsurgency operations.

The authors of FM 3-24 shared Galula's emphasis on nonmilitary operations. They asserted that the ultimate objective of counterinsurgency was inherently political. Namely, the host-nation government's legitimacy within the population affected by the insurgency. FM 3-24 stated that military operations could only "address the symptoms of a loss of legitimacy," and that achieving a "durable peace" required nonmilitary operations that bolstered the legitimacy of the host-nation's government.<sup>25</sup> FM 3-24 expanded the role of suitable nonmilitary operations beyond political and administrative reforms, and included a host of humanitarian, social, and economic efforts designed to garner popular support by meeting the basic needs of the contested population.<sup>26</sup> Population control, or direct intervention to prevent insurgent access to the local population, constituted another variety of nonmilitary operation in FM 3-24; however, the field manual asserted that any population control efforts should be carefully justified by the host-nation government and solely designed to protect the affected population from the insurgents.<sup>27</sup> US Army counterinsurgency doctrine argued that nonmilitary operations were crucial elements in a successful counterinsurgency campaign. FM 3-24's emphasis on nonmilitary operations is somewhat counterintuitive in a military field manual; however, it adhered to the central tenet of population-centric counterinsurgency. The center of gravity in an insurgency is the civilian population, and military operations alone cannot win popular support for the counterinsurgent cause.

The US Army's political and cultural context influenced its vision of nonmilitary operations. FM 3-24 employed nonmilitary operations to build popular consensus for a legitimate

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<sup>25</sup> FM 3-24, 1-21-1-22.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 2-1-2-2.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 5-21.

host-nation government, meet the humanitarian and economic needs of the contested population, and protect the population from insurgent predation. A less benevolent form of nonmilitary operations, based on the coercion of the civilian population, could support a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. Galula recognized that a counterinsurgent could isolate a population from an insurgency through coercive strength rather than by garnering popular support. However, he contended that “[i]n default of liberal inclinations and of a sense of justice” the counterinsurgent should seek political conciliation with the population to “take as much wind as possible out of the insurgents sails.”<sup>28</sup> The authors of FM 3-24 recognized that nonmilitary operations helped isolate an insurgency from the population, but the US Army’s moral and ethical guidelines dictated the range of acceptable operations. That range excluded exploitative and coercive practices; however, a counterinsurgent force could use such methods to isolate an insurgency. Suppressive and coercive nonmilitary operations, although unacceptable by US and Western standards, could be used to accomplish the primary goal of population-centric counterinsurgency, separating the population from the insurgency.

Despite the importance of nonmilitary operations in counterinsurgency, Galula recognized that nonmilitary operations unsupported by military operations were often ineffective.<sup>29</sup> FM 3-24 also contends that military force played an indispensable role in counterinsurgency.<sup>30</sup> The violent nature of an insurgency required military force to overcome the immediate insurgent threat and allow nonmilitary efforts to take root. Population-centric counterinsurgency theory and doctrine maintained that only political and nonmilitary efforts could ultimately defeat an insurgency, but that those efforts could only survive with support from military operations. The symbiotic relationship between military and nonmilitary operations,

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<sup>28</sup> Galula, 102-103.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

<sup>30</sup> FM 3-24, 2-1.

therefore, required close coordination and synchronization between military and nonmilitary authorities.

The second conceptual lens used to interpret the case studies and test population-centric counterinsurgency is unity of effort between counterinsurgent military and nonmilitary operations. Unity of effort is a critical tenet of population-centric counterinsurgency theory because it binds the military effort to defeat the insurgents in the field with the nonmilitary effort to improve governance and secure the support of the population. Galula argued that many of the counterinsurgent's strengths, such as political, economic, and informational power were of little use in militarily defeating an elusive and irregular insurgent force, but could positively influence the local population. Successful counterinsurgencies required mutually supporting civilian and military efforts oriented on the common goal of isolating the insurgent from the population. However, achieving a "single direction" between civilian and military efforts required a single leader to direct the civilian and military elements of counterinsurgent power, and Galula believed that only a civilian leader could effectively coordinate civil and military power to win the support of the population.<sup>31</sup> Galula's insistence upon a civilian leader largely resulted from his personal context. Galula wrote from the perspective of an officer serving an advanced democracy with a well-established distinction between civilian and military roles. He believed that a military commander would prioritize the military defeat of the insurgent force over political conciliation with the local civilian population. Galula, however, recognized that a military leader from a state with a different political organization could serve as an effective commander of a counterinsurgency campaign so long as the officer had a direct link to the ruling party and could harness the civilian apparatus under his control without parochial bias.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Galula, 83, 87-92.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

FM 3-24 described two concepts to achieve synchronization between civilian and military activities: unity of command and unity of effort. Unity of command entailed a single commander who controlled all US Government organizations committed to a counterinsurgency operation, and unity of effort described all governmental agencies operating toward a common goal under separate chains of command. Unity of command mirrored Galula's theory of an ideal command structure for a counterinsurgent force, and FM 3-24 identified it as the preferred organization for a counterinsurgency operation. However, the field manual recognized that the disparate organizations involved in a counterinsurgency campaign often prevented formal unity of command and that informal unity of effort was usually the most realistic way to synchronize military and nonmilitary efforts.<sup>33</sup>

The final conceptual lens is counterinsurgent success. Counterinsurgent success is the most complex concept examined in this monograph because it synthesizes the definition of success found in counterinsurgency theory and doctrine with the specific objectives and aims of a particular counterinsurgent forces. Counterinsurgency theory and doctrine identifies winning the support of the population and isolating the insurgency as the hallmark of a successful counterinsurgency campaign. Galula defined victory in a counterinsurgency as the destruction of an insurgent force and political organization coupled with "the permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population, isolation not enforced upon the population but maintained by and with the population."<sup>34</sup> Similarly, FM 3-24 stated that "[t]he primary objective of any COIN [counterinsurgency] operation is to foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government" that leads to the isolation of the insurgent from the population.<sup>35</sup> The theoretical and doctrinal definitions of counterinsurgent success are necessarily general and abstract. They

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<sup>33</sup> FM 3-24, 2-2-2-4.

<sup>34</sup> Galula, 77.

<sup>35</sup> FM 3-24, 1-21.

express the conditions necessary to defeat an insurgency; however, a counterinsurgent's strategic goal may be more limited. A counterinsurgent force may aim to contain an insurgency while refusing to commit the resources necessary to defeat the insurgent military and political apparatus.

A counterinsurgency campaign, like any other military campaign, is a means to a political end. The political objective in a counterinsurgency may not require the destruction of an insurgency, and the costs of a counterinsurgency campaign may prevent the counterinsurgent force from pursuing the definitive success described in counterinsurgency theory and doctrine.<sup>36</sup> A counterinsurgency campaign may defeat an insurgency, but if it does so at an unacceptable cost, or fails to accomplish the political aim, then it is unsuccessful. The isolation of the insurgent from the population may defeat the insurgency, but not achieve the counterinsurgent's political end. Therefore, success in a counterinsurgency requires, at a minimum, a level of defeat and isolation of the insurgent necessary to achieve the counterinsurgent's political goal. This definition conceptually makes counterinsurgent success contingent upon the specific context of each counterinsurgency campaign; however, any broadly useful theory or doctrine of counterinsurgency must account for the wide contextual variety of possible counterinsurgencies.

#### Empirical Literature Review

The US Army's population-centric counterinsurgency doctrine met with widespread acceptance, but it also garnered some critiques. The critics rarely rejected population-centric techniques outright, but argued that the Army's approach to counterinsurgency was too narrow. Gentile believed that the US Army's fixation on the population-centric precepts of FM 3-24 limited strategic thought and prevented leaders from improvising new approaches to counterinsurgency to fit varied circumstances. He argued that the focus on population-centric

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<sup>36</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 90-92.

tactics forced the Army into costly nation-building campaigns that did not always suite the strategic environment.<sup>37</sup> Cox and Bruschino expanded on Gentile's thesis and argued that the US Army's version of population-centric counterinsurgency relied too heavily on a limited number of historical examples and underplayed the role of coercion in population control.<sup>38</sup> The critics of the US Army's counterinsurgency doctrine did not deny the suitability of population-centric counterinsurgency in some contexts; however, they identified that the Army's framework of counterinsurgency operations may not be useful beyond a narrow scope of environments, thus limiting the applicability of FM 3-24.

Cox and Bruschino note the near impossibility of finding a single method of counterinsurgency that could be applied successfully in any situation.<sup>39</sup> The diversity of social and military conditions that surround insurgencies likely make their contention true. However, even if creating a universally applicable doctrine of counterinsurgency is impossible, testing doctrinal concepts against a diverse set of historical case studies can help the scholar and practitioner determine if a doctrine is more or less likely to be useful in a future, undefined conflict. The theoretical and historical foundation of US Army counterinsurgency doctrine is disproportionately reliant on the experiences of western militaries fighting twentieth century

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<sup>37</sup> Gian P. Gentile, "A Strategy of Tactics: Population-centric COIN and the Army," *Parameters*, vol. 39, no. 3 (Autumn 2009): 5-9, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Dan G. Cox and Thomas Bruscino, "Introduction," in *Population-Centric Counterinsurgency: A False Idol*, ed. Dan G. Cox and Thomas Bruscino (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2011), 7-8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

insurgencies of national liberation.<sup>40</sup> In many regards, this focus is justifiable. As advanced western democracies, the counterinsurgent states share a common political and military organization with the contemporary United States, and the military technology used during the conflicts are more similar to current technology than the materiel used during older counterinsurgencies. However, any similarities between past counterinsurgencies and future counterinsurgent campaigns is limited. The changing global political and social environment combined with the diverse histories and local conditions that facilitate an insurgency ensure that future counterinsurgencies will differ from those in the past. Therefore, it is crucial to test current doctrine against a wide variety of past counterinsurgencies to identify the principles and concepts that apply in diverse conditions and are most likely to work in an uncertain future.

This analysis will assess the efficacy of aspects of current US Army counterinsurgency doctrine in two counterinsurgent campaigns that differ from the counterinsurgencies usually invoked to justify population-centric techniques. The political organization of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union differed significantly from that of advanced western democracies, and the Muslim insurgencies in the Caucasus and in Central Asia lacked the Marxist ideology and party organization of the twentieth century wars of national liberation. The selection of the Caucasian War and the Basmachi rebellion provides diversity to the analysis of population-centric counterinsurgency; however, the nature of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union introduces some limitations. The imperial Russians and Soviets sought to integrate the Caucasus and Central

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<sup>40</sup> Field Manual (FM) 3-24.2, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 3-9-3-10. In addition to Galula's writings, FM 3-24.2 cites the works of the British officers Sir Robert Thompson and C.E. Callwell as the theoretical foundations of US counterinsurgency doctrine. Thompson, like Nagl, examined the counterinsurgencies against Communist national liberation movements in Vietnam and Malaysia. Callwell, a partial outlier in the group, analyzed the imperial British "small wars" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with a particular focus on the Boer War. Notably, Callwell's contribution to FM 3-24.2 exclusively deals with military operations against the enemy while the principles of Galula and Thompson referenced in the field manual focus on population-centric concepts such as winning the support of the local population and establishing sound governance.

Asia into their respective empires, and neither army recognized the same moral and legal restraints codified in US military doctrine. These factors contradict US counterinsurgency doctrine. FM 3-24 establishes eventual transition of all political authority to a legitimate host-nation government as the goal of any counterinsurgency, and places heavy constraints on the use of force.<sup>41</sup> These differences make the Caucasian War and the Basmachi rebellion unsuitable case studies to test the entirety of US counterinsurgency doctrine. However, this analysis will test a crucial component of the population-centric approach to counterinsurgency; namely, the importance of unity of effort between military and nonmilitary operations to success in counterinsurgency operations.

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<sup>41</sup> FM 3-24, 1-21, 1-25.

## Methodology

### Introduction

This monograph will use a structured, focused comparison of the case studies to assess the efficacy of population-centric counterinsurgency. The monograph will be structured by posing a set of general questions to each case study that test population-centric counterinsurgency against the historical record. The questions will focus the examination of each case study on the conceptual lenses identified as the independent and dependent variables. The structured, focused comparison methodology ensures consistency in the examination of both case studies, and clearly defines the limits of the analysis. It is impossible to analyze every variable of interest in a given case study; however, the structured, focused comparison methodology provides the uniformity necessary to systematically assess the relationship between the conceptual variables and conduct a valid comparison between the case studies.<sup>42</sup>

### Case Selection

The working hypothesis will be tested through the use of structured, focused comparative case studies. This monograph will examine the imperial Russian Caucasian campaigns from 1801-1864 and the Soviet suppression of the Basmachis from 1918-1933. The Caucasian War and the Basmachi rebellion are well suited to comparative analysis. Both conflicts pitted predominately ethnic Russian forces against an Islamic insurgency in rough, mountainous terrain.<sup>43</sup> The counterinsurgency approaches of the imperial Russians and Soviets also diverged in important ways. The Russians focused on containing and decisively defeating the Caucasian insurgents through the use of military force for the first forty-five years of the conflict and only

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<sup>42</sup> Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennet, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 67-72.

<sup>43</sup> Baumann, 211.

transitioned to a strategy that emphasized population control late in the war.<sup>44</sup> The Soviets took a distinctly different approach against the Basmachis in Central Asia. The Red forces aggressively conducted combat operations against the Basmachis, and simultaneously pursued political, economic, and social objectives to shape the local population throughout the conflict.<sup>45</sup>

## Variables

This study will assess the relationship between the independent variables of unity of effort and occurrences of nonmilitary operations and the dependent variable of counterinsurgent success. Unity of effort will be measured by incidents of unity of command or purposeful coordination between civil and military forces during counterinsurgency operations. Occurrences of nonmilitary operations will be measured by incidents of administrative reforms and political, social, economic, or informational initiatives undertaken by the counterinsurgent authorities to degrade support for the insurgency.

The dependent variable of counterinsurgent success will be measured by the counterinsurgent's ability to isolate the insurgency from the local population, and by the successful achievement of the counterinsurgents goals and objectives. The first measure will primarily assess short-term counterinsurgent success. Insurgencies rarely end quickly, and it is possible that a counterinsurgent strategy could successfully disrupt an insurgency. However, the strategy could be abandoned prior to achieving all counterinsurgent goals. The second measure will assess long-term counterinsurgent success, and test if the principles of population-centric counterinsurgency are supported over the course of an entire campaign.

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<sup>44</sup> Baumann, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "The Basmachi or Freeman's Revolt in Turkestan, 1918-24," *Soviet Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3 (July 1981): 360-361.

## Focused Questions

The analysis of each case study will answer four questions related to the independent and dependent variables. The answers to the questions will test the relationship between the variables and form the basis of the comparative analysis.

Question One: Did the counterinsurgent force use nonmilitary operations as an integral part of the counterinsurgency campaign?

Question Two: Did the counterinsurgent force achieve unity of effort, and coordinate its military and nonmilitary operations toward a common goal?

Question Three: Did the counterinsurgent force isolate the insurgents from the population?

Question Four: Did the counterinsurgent force accomplish its political goals?

## Summary

This monograph will test selected principles of population-centric counterinsurgency against the case studies of the Caucasian War and the Basmachi rebellion. It will assess the relationship between the independent variables of occurrences of nonmilitary operations and unity of effort to the dependent variable of counterinsurgent success. The case studies will be examined through a structured, focused comparison that will provide uniformity to the analysis of both case study. The findings from each case study will be compared to test the effectiveness of population-centric counterinsurgency principles in previously unexamined historical contexts.

## The Caucasian War

### Introduction

Despite its relative obscurity, a significant amount of English language scholarly literature deals with the Russian Empire's protracted struggle against the tribesmen in the north Caucasus Mountains in the early and mid-nineteenth century. The scholarship analyzes several key aspects of the war including its social and political context, the tactical and operational challenges that faced the Russians, and the Russian attempt to integrate the Caucasus into the empire. Most of the literature deals with these key themes and recognizes them as critical elements in the Russian struggle against the Caucasian mountaineers. However, the relative importance of each theme varies in many of the works dealing with the Caucasian War.

The Caucasian War unfolded against a complex social, political, and cultural backdrop. King described the influence of Caucasian geography on social and ethnic development in the region. The impenetrability of the mountain ranges bred social, ethnic, and religious diversity and prevented political or cultural unification.<sup>46</sup> Despite the diversity in the region, two major cultures influenced the Caucasus prior to Russian intervention. The eastern Azeri plain and the eastern Georgian lands fell into the Persian cultural sphere, and western Georgian lands along the Black Sea and the northwest Caucasus were Turkish influenced.<sup>47</sup> During the Caucasian campaigns, the Russians faced a truly divided land. The North and South Caucasus generally ran east to west and divided the region into northern and southern zones, but competing Persian and Turkish influences divided the Caucasus into western and eastern areas of cultural and political influence.<sup>48</sup> The geographic and cultural divisions in the Caucasus, coupled with the highly

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<sup>46</sup> Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

localized tribes who lived in largely inaccessible mountains, made the region naturally resistant to unification or imperial domination.

Kazemzadeh, Allen, and Muratoff placed the Caucasian War within the broader context of relations between the Ottoman Empire, Persia, and Russian Empire.<sup>49</sup> The roots of Russian competition with the Ottomans and Persians began with the Russian expansion and encroachment in the northern Caucasus in the seventeenth century and intensified with Peter the Great's campaigns to extend Russian power along the Black Sea coast in the eighteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Russia successfully established itself as the dominant imperial power in the Caucasus, but the Ottomans and Persians maintained an active interest in the region and sought to disrupt Russian power in the region by aiding the Caucasian rebels.<sup>51</sup> Russian gains in the Caucasus also drew the attention of the British who feared that an unchecked Russia might establish Mediterranean ports in Turkey.<sup>52</sup> The Crimean War was the most overt attempt by the Ottoman Empire and its European allies to contain Russian expansionism, but the Ottomans also colluded with the British to undermine Russian rule in the Caucasus by supporting the growing insurgency in the northern Caucasus. The shared religious identity and traditional Turkic influence in the northern Caucasus made the Ottomans a natural sponsor for the Caucasian rebels, and they actively encouraged rebellion throughout the region; however, Ottoman and British support was ultimately more talk than action, and the Ottomans generally overestimated their role in the uprising.<sup>53</sup> Despite the imperial competition

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<sup>49</sup> Fruiz Kazemzadeh, "Russian Penetration of the Caucasus," in *Russian Imperialism: From Ivan the Great to the Revolution*, ed. Taras Hunczak (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 239, 240, 248.

<sup>50</sup> W.E.D Allen and Paul Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco Caucasian Border, 1828-1921* (Nashville, TN: The Battery Press, 1953), 10-11.

<sup>51</sup> Kazemzadeh, 240-248.

<sup>52</sup> Allen and Muratoff, 46-47.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-51.

for dominance in the Caucasus during the nineteenth century, the insurgency in the northern Caucasus was a largely local phenomenon that grew out of the imposition of Russian rule over a diverse population accustomed to independence and zealous of their cultural and religious traditions.

King and Kazemzadeh described the history of autonomy among the tribes and minor kingdoms in the Caucasus. The Caucasians usually lacked the power to oppose their powerful neighbors to the south and the north outright; however, they grew adept at preserving their autonomy by playing their nominal imperial overlords against each other.<sup>54</sup> The Russians broke with the traditional role of imperial hegemony in the Caucasus by attempting to integrate the region into the wider Empire instead of simply accepting pledges of homage from the local nobles and tribal chieftains. The disparate power structure in the Caucasus confounded the integration process because the Caucasians, particularly in the north, lacked a well-established feudal hierarchy that the Russian Empire could coopt into its own aristocratic class.<sup>55</sup> Imperial military power was sufficient to compel the existing Caucasian power brokers to submit, but Henze demonstrated how elite submission to the Russians destabilized the region and contributed to some of the most potent opponents of the empire. The collusion of the elites in the northeastern Caucasus delegitimized their influence within their communities and left a leadership void. Charismatic leaders, often calling upon the mountaineers shared Muslim identity to drum up support over disparate tribes, filled the power vacuum and gained legitimacy by promising to fight the Russians.<sup>56</sup> The Murid movement under the leadership of the guerilla commander Shamil represented the apogee of religious-inspired armed resistance to the Russians. Muridism,

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<sup>54</sup> King, 23; Kazemzadeh, 246.

<sup>55</sup> King, 36-37.

<sup>56</sup> Paul B. Henze, "Fire and Sword in the Caucasus: The 19<sup>th</sup> Century resistance of the North Caucasian Mountaineers," *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1983): 16.

an energetic Muslim movement with streaks of radicalism and fundamentalism, rejected Russian influence and threatened traditional elites.<sup>57</sup> Shamil exploited the popular appeal of Muridism to recruit a large following in Dagestan and Chechnya and won a series of victories against the imperial armies during the 1830s and 1840s. However, Shamil's failure to unite with the rebels to the west in Circassia demonstrated the limits of Muridism. Circassia did not suffer the same vacuum of anti-Russian leadership that existed in Dagestan and Chechnya, and the strict religiosity of the Murid movement did not appeal to the relatively secular Circassians.<sup>58</sup> Shamil and other guerilla leaders also suffered from military limitations. They excelled at conducting raids and ambushing foolhardy imperial expeditions into the mountains, but lacked the power to expel the Russians from the Caucasus.<sup>59</sup>

The stout resistance and excellent guerilla tactics of the Caucasian mountaineers forced several adaptations to Russian tactics and the imperial operational approach during the course of the war. Baumann identified three main phases to the conflict. During the first phase from 1801 to 1832 the Russians sought to contain the rebels in their mountain fastness and protect the flow of trade between their lands in Georgia and the rest of the empire. The meteoric rise of Shamil precipitated several unsuccessful campaigns to force the guerilla leader into a decisive battle during the second phase from 1832-1845. During the final phase from 1845 to 1859 the Russians adopted a methodical approach that focused on establishing incremental control of the population at the fringes of rebel strongholds and gradually denying key terrain and draining available human resources to the rebels.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 17-19.

<sup>59</sup> Baumann, 12-19.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 5, 33-36.

The Russians adapted their administrative approach to the Caucasus during the course of the war as they grappled to find the best way to integrate the culturally, ethnically, and religiously foreign region into the empire. Rhineland and Brooks traced the development of administrative policy in the region, and analyzed the competing visions of imperial integration. The role of local, Caucasian institutions was the crux of the debate over integration. Conservatives and hardline modernizers believed that the Caucasus could not become a reliable part of the Russian Empire if it did not adopt the Russian administrative system used elsewhere in the Empire. The opposing camp contended that allowances to local customs and legal traditions were necessary to coopt local elites and gain the support of the population for Russian rule.<sup>61</sup> Tsar Nicholas I, who ruled during the most contentious stages of the Caucasian War, favored the rigid approach that rejected local custom for most of his reign. However, the repeated failures against Shamil forced Nicholas to pursue a different approach, and, in 1844, he appointed Count M. S. Vorontsov as viceroy of the Caucasus and invested him with near absolute power in the region. Vorontsov relaxed the administrative approach of his predecessors and made concessions to local custom and legal traditions.<sup>62</sup> The adoption of a more flexible administrative approach coincided with the incremental operational approach by the Russian Army, and signaled a shift in imperial outlook on the war. Vorontsov and his successors realized the importance of controlling the population through coercion or concessions to deny the guerillas a base of support.

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<sup>61</sup> L. Hamilton Rhineland, "Russia's Imperial Policy: The Administration of the Caucasus in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 17, no. 2/3 (Summer and Fall, 1975): 220.

<sup>62</sup> E. Willis Brooks, "Nicholas I as Reformer: Russian Attempts to Conquer the Caucasus, 1825-1855," in *Nation and Ideology: Essays in Honor of Wayne S. Vucinich*, ed. Ivo Banac (Boulder, CO: Columbia University Press, 1981), 245-254.

## Analysis

The Russian counterinsurgency strategy varied greatly throughout the Caucasian War. The political objectives, approach to nonmilitary operations, and amount of resources expended changed drastically throughout the struggle. The diversity of Russian strategy prevents a single appraisal of the Caucasian War; therefore, the analysis will be divided into the three distinct phases described by Baumann: the period of limited policing and containment from 1801 to 1832, the pursuit of decisive battle and quick victory from 1832-1845, and the methodical campaign to erode rebel support through incrementally expanding the Russian sphere of control from 1845-1859.<sup>63</sup>

Question One: Did the counterinsurgent force use nonmilitary operations as an integral part of the counterinsurgency campaign?

Russian nonmilitary operations played a limited role during the initial phase of the counterinsurgency. From 1801 to 1832, imperial authorities perceived the growing insurgency in the mountains as a policing problem, and dedicated minimal military resources to the region. The authorities committed the limited resources to disperse raiders, protect trade, and defend key nodes in the lines of communications between Georgia and southern Russia.<sup>64</sup> The Russians did not seek to penetrate the rebel's mountain fastness, and conducted few nonmilitary operations that directly influenced the insurgent's supporting population.<sup>65</sup> The Russian administration attempted to indirectly influence the mountain tribes by coopting tribal elites. The local elites in the North Caucasus lacked the power to resist the Russians, and generally acquiesced to their demands. The Russians, however, overestimated the local nobles' control over their own population, and

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<sup>63</sup> Baumann, 5.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-7.

<sup>65</sup> Brooks, 230.

Russian influence into the hinterlands remained limited.<sup>66</sup> The Russians also attempted to integrate the Caucasus into the Empire through an uneven program of administrative reform.

Administrative reform constituted the second major nonmilitary operation conducted by the Russians during the early period of the Caucasian War. Prior to the Caucasian War, imperial authorities struggled to craft a coherent and effective administration to govern its new acquisitions in the Caucasus and integrate them into the Empire.<sup>67</sup> Two competing philosophies dominated the Russian approach toward administrative reform. One philosophy contended that the Caucasus ought to be treated like any other part of the Empire with a standardized legal code administered by local authorities under the close control of the imperial bureaucracy in Saint Petersburg. The champions of the uniformed and centralized approach to administrative reform believed that only a complete break with customary law and governance could fully integrate the Caucasus into the Empire and bring civilization to its backwards inhabitants. The second philosophy argued that, given the cultural uniqueness of the region, an effective Caucasian administration required considerable autonomy, the freedom to use native laws and institutions, and the flexibility to gradually integrate the region into the Saint Petersburg bureaucracy. The advocates of the regional and gradualist approach did not reject the goal of full integration and standardization, but recognized that the political and cultural dynamics of Caucasian society made immediate attempts at centralization and standardization counterproductive.<sup>68</sup> The competition between the proponents of centralization and regionalism dominated Russia's administrative reforms in the early stage of the war, and recurred throughout the struggle.

Russian policy toward administrative reform vacillated between regionalism and centralization during the containment stage of the Caucasian War. Tsar Alexander I attempted to

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<sup>66</sup> Henze, *Fire and Sword in the Caucasus*, 16.

<sup>67</sup> Rhineland, 220-221.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

establish a largely autonomous Caucasian administration and directed his Administrator-in-Chief, General K. F. Knorring, to “take local customs and attitudes into account in setting up and running the new administration” in Georgia in 1801.<sup>69</sup> The early Russian officials in the Caucasus agreed with Tsar Alexander’s preference for regionalism, and, despite some opposition from the Minister of the Interior, the regional approach to administrative reform took root in the early nineteenth century. Initially, Georgia consumed most of the Russian administrative focus; however, a new Administrator-in-Chief, General N. F. Rtishchev attempted to apply regionalist principles in the North Caucasus. He invited Dagestani leaders to take on governmental responsibilities, and argued that “a purely Russian form of government would be far removed from the overall aim of the public good.”<sup>70</sup> The early Russian administration’s regionalist tendencies differentiated Russian rule from the rest of the Empire, but the social and cultural diversity within the Caucasus prevented a single coherent Caucasian administration from taking root. In their attempt to appeal to the hodge-podge of local laws and customs, the Russians created a confused and fractured administration with differing legal systems and governmental organizations that failed to successfully govern the region.<sup>71</sup>

General-lieutenant A. P. Ermolov, the Russian commander from 1816 to 1827, sought to standardize the administration throughout the Caucasus while maintaining a high degree of regional autonomy within the Empire. Ermolov recognized that administration needed to account for local customs, but rejected his predecessor’s ad hoc approach to integrating native laws and governance into the imperial administration.<sup>72</sup> Ermolov’s acceptance of regionalism was conditional and pragmatic. He believed that Caucasians, particularly the Muslim inhabitants of

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<sup>69</sup> Rhineland, 220-221.

<sup>70</sup> N. F. Rtishchev in *Ibid.*, 223-224.

<sup>71</sup> Rhineland, 224-225.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 224-226.

the North Caucasus, needed to fully integrate into the Empire. However, Ermolov contended that integration would happen naturally, and any attempt to quickly Russify the Caucasus would invite resistance.<sup>73</sup> Despite his preference for gradual integration, Ermolov intervened in Caucasian society to a greater degree than his predecessors. An integrated and effective pan-Caucasian administration required extensive knowledge of local customs and power relationships; however, gaining the necessary understanding of the complexities of Caucasian society proved difficult and often impossible. Cultural knowledge of the North Caucasus proved particularly illusive. Prior to Ermolov's tenure, the North Caucasus had remained relatively loyal and Russian authorities rarely intervened in its internal affairs. Ermolov changed this policy and attempted to exert effective Russian control North Caucasian affairs prior to Ermolov's tenure, and his attempts to exert Russian control over the North Caucasus were often ham-fisted. The practices of replacing ruling khans with Russian officers and renaming "khanates" "provinces" antagonized the local population and supported the notion that the Russians sought to undermine the traditional culture and Islam in the North Caucasus.<sup>74</sup> Ermolov's aggressive campaign to standardize the Caucasian administration, coupled with his brutal crackdown on villages that he believed supported insurgents, alienated large portions of the North Caucasian society and encouraged the growth of Muridism that set the region aflame in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>75</sup> The role that Ermosov's regionalist administrative reforms played in the growth of anti-Russian militancy demonstrated the social complexity of the Caucasus and the challenges facing Russian nonmilitary operations. Even policies designed to strike a middle ground between local customs and Russian officialdom could backfire and create militarized discontent if executed improperly.

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<sup>73</sup> Brooks, 229.

<sup>74</sup> Rhineland, 226.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 226-227.

The ascension of Tsar Nicholas I to the throne spelled the temporary end to the autonomy and flexibility enjoyed by Russian officials in the Caucasus. The Decembrist uprising against Nicholas' ascension made him wary of the loyalty of his officers and officials throughout the Empire, and he dispatched Prince I. F. Paskevich and General-major D. V. Davydov, both trusted advisors, to assist Ermolov in preparing campaigns against the Turks and Persians. Nicholas also required Ermolov to provide detailed information about his proposed regional administration, and deployed more trusted associates to complete the necessary study. Ermolov interpreted the interference from Saint Petersburg as a sign of imperial disfavor and resigned. Paskevich succeeded Ermolov as Administrator-in-Chief and efficiently defeated the Persians and Ottomans in a series of campaigns from 1826 to 1828. The wars consolidated Russian control over the region; however, they also exposed the weakness of the Caucasian administration.<sup>76</sup> The wars also exposed the discontent of the North Caucasian mountaineers with Russian rule. A religiously fueled uprising in Chechnya coincided with a Persian invasion in 1826.<sup>77</sup> Paskevich believed that the uprising was a byproduct of the broken Caucasian administration, and that reform could reconcile the North Caucasians to the Empire. Paskevich faulted the regionalist approach of his predecessors for creating an ineffective and often predatory administration, and argued that the administration needed to be Russified and all native officials purged in order to provide efficient and fair governance in the region.<sup>78</sup> Paskevich's centralizing approach nested with Nicholas' micromanaging predisposition and his campaign to strengthen autocracy throughout the Empire.<sup>79</sup> Initially, both the Tsar and his Administrator-in-Chief agreed that the insurgency in the North Caucasus could be solved through reform, and Nicholas even directed that considerations for

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<sup>76</sup> Brooks, 230-231.

<sup>77</sup> Baumann, 9.

<sup>78</sup> Brooks, 231-232.

<sup>79</sup> Rhineland, 227.

local customs be made during reforms out of respect for the cultural peculiarities of the region. However, Nicholas quickly abandoned his nonmilitary approach to the Caucasian crisis and ordered preparations be made for a massive military campaign to bring the rebellious mountain tribes to heel. Simultaneously, Nicholas and his officials dropped consideration of local customs in administrative reform, and advocated a complete Russification to force the local population to integrate with Russia.<sup>80</sup> Nicholas' determination to aggressively pursue a military solution to the North Caucasian insurgency and to force cultural integration through a centralized and standardized administration marked a low point for Russian nonmilitary operations in the Caucasus, and set the stage for the illusory pursuit of decisive military victory.

Nicholas reassigned Paskevich to suppress a rebellion in 1831 and appointed Baron General G. V. Rosen to assume the post of Administrator-in-Chief. Rosen's tenure from 1831 to 1837 coincided with the dramatic rise of Shamil and the spread of Muridism throughout Chechnya and Dagestan.<sup>81</sup> Rosen recognized that attempts to force integration through Russifying the Caucasian administration contributed to the worsening situation; however, his attempts to restore consideration of local customs into imperial governance were blocked by officials within the Saint Petersburg bureaucracy.<sup>82</sup> Growing impatience with the rate of centralizing reforms under Rosen caused Nicholas to appoint a special committee to create new administrative statutes. Nicholas selected Baron P. V. Gan, a senator with no Caucasian experience, to head the committee. Gan used the committee to advance an agenda of radical administrative Russification and maneuvered to get Rosen relieved. The malleable General E. A. Golovin replaced Rosen and supported Gan's ambitions to administer the Caucasus exactly like an internal province of

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<sup>80</sup> Brooks, 233-236.

<sup>81</sup> Henze, *Fire and Sword in the Caucasus*, 16-18.

<sup>82</sup> Rhineland, 229.

Russia.<sup>83</sup> Administrative centralization and a simplistic vision of nonmilitary operations dominated Russia's Caucasian policy during the late 1830s. Gan and officials in Saint Petersburg believed that tactical success against Shamil's forces and administrative Russification alone could end the rebellion, and officers that advocated greater cultural awareness and nonmilitary operations such as education initiatives and economic development were ignored.<sup>84</sup>

The advocates of centralization and standardization saw reason for optimism. In 1839 a major expedition under the command of General P. Kh. Grabbe succeeded in destroying Shamil's de facto capital of Akhulgo.<sup>85</sup> Shamil escaped, but violence in the Northeast Caucasus dramatically declined following the expedition. The short-term reduction in violence fed Russian optimism. Many officials in the Caucasus and Saint Petersburg believed that after they enacted Gan's Russified administrative system their control across the region would finally be consolidated.<sup>86</sup> Shortly after the implementation of the new administration in April 1840, Gan reported to the Tsar that the reform had been implemented "without the slightest shock and as if by magic" and that the region was in "complete quiet and calm."<sup>87</sup> Gan's cheery assessment, however, did not match reality. The rigid new code almost made the Caucasian administrative system grind to a halt within months, and the resourceful Shamil quickly reorganized and marshalled a force more powerful than the one defeated at Akhulgo.<sup>88</sup> Apart from unwieldiness, the newly Russified administration enabled Shamil's recovery. The new administration's refusal to make concessions to local culture antagonized North Caucasian society and enhanced the

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<sup>83</sup> Brooks, 239.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>85</sup> Baumann, 12-17.

<sup>86</sup> Brooks, 239-240.

<sup>87</sup> P. V. Gan in Ibid., 241.

<sup>88</sup> Baumann, 17; Rhineland, 230.

Murid narrative that framed Russians as enemies of Islam. Shamil also capitalized on rage over the punitive razing of a village that had housed Shamil after he escaped.<sup>89</sup> The Russian disregard for the complexities of Caucasian society, combined with clumsy civil-military relations, exacerbated the military challenge posed by the North Caucasian insurgents, and brought the Russian situation in the Caucasus to a crisis point.

The growing strength of Shamil demonstrated the weakness of the Russian strategy and forced a reassessment. In 1842, Nicholas dispatched a Caucasian Committee to assess the military and civil situation in the Caucasus, and they reported the desperate military situation and the failure of Gan's Russified administration to the Tsar.<sup>90</sup> Such grim reports and defeats at the hands of Shamil in 1842 and 1843 forced Nicholas to reevaluate his Caucasian strategy.<sup>91</sup> Initially, Nicholas empowered the Caucasian Committee to create an administration that accounted for the region's diversity; however, lacking a unified vision, the Committee's efforts produced a hodge-podge of reforms reminiscent of the earliest days of Russian administration of the Caucasus. Nicholas concluded that forming a coherent administration that respected Caucasian culture required a strong central authority in the region that operated with nearly complete autonomy from the Saint Petersburg bureaucracy, and accordingly appointed the distinguished Count M. S. Vorontsov as Viceroy of the Caucasus in November 1844. The Tsar invested Vorontsov with unprecedented powers over both military and civil affairs, and, as Viceroy, Vorontsov answered directly to the Nicholas instead of the Saint Petersburg bureaucracy.<sup>92</sup> Vorontsov's position provided him with unprecedented power and the flexibility to drastically change the direction of Russian policy in the Caucasus.

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<sup>89</sup> Brooks, 241-242.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>91</sup> Baumann, 17-19.

<sup>92</sup> Rhineland, 231.

Vorontsov used his independence to change the Russian military and nonmilitary approach. Under significant pressure from Nicholas, Vorontsov launched a major operation to capture Shamil's base in Dargo in 1844. The Russians took Dargo, but failed to capture the guerilla commander or inflict meaningful damage on the movement. Vorontsov concluded that the insurgency in the North Caucasus could not be solved through decisive battle, and turned to an indirect approach that emphasized incrementally gaining control of Shamil's base of support.<sup>93</sup> Vorontsov supported his new focus on controlling the population through dramatic administrative reform. He replaced a large number of Russian officials with native Caucasians and expected the remaining Russians to treat the local population with respect and show them the benefits of Russian rule. Vorontsov's reforms administrative reforms did not immediately ameliorate all of the tensions between Russian imperialists and their subjects, but it did change the attitude of many Caucasians and laid the foundation of future integration and economic development.<sup>94</sup> The Russians also capitalized on a strain of popular discontent with the Murid conservative application of Sharia law, and sought to drive a wedge between Shamil and the population by instituting tribal courts to settle local disputes in newly conquered territory.<sup>95</sup> Vorontsov took a conciliatory approach toward the Caucasians with his administrative reforms; however, he used far more direct and coercive measures against populations that he believed supported Shamil and other insurgent groups.

Vorontsov supplemented his campaign to deny Shamil his base of support with a series of nonmilitary efforts designed to gain control of the local population. He implemented a "cut-and-burn" policy that removed concealment for guerillas and improved Russian access to villages formerly controlled by Shamil. In certain cases, Russian officers took the extreme measure of

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<sup>93</sup> Baumann, 20-25.

<sup>94</sup> Rhineland, 232-234.

<sup>95</sup> Baumann, 34.

forcibly resettling entire villages into Russian controlled areas to secure them from Murid intimidation and remove possible bases of support from the insurgents.<sup>96</sup> Vorontsov made limited use of forced resettlement in the Northeast Caucasus; however, his campaign of population control against Shamil's support base in Chechnya and Dagestan foreshadowed Russia's final campaign against the Circassians in the Northwest Caucasus.

The Circassians lived in the mountains that bordered the Black Sea, and waged an insurgency against Russian authority throughout the early and mid-nineteenth century. Although the Circassian struggle was contemporaneous to the Murid revolt in Chechnya and Dagestan the Circassians never adopted Muridism and rarely cooperated with Shamil.<sup>97</sup> No Circassian leader matched Shamil's dynamism, but the Circassian fight for freedom lasted for years after Shamil's surrender in 1859.<sup>98</sup> The Russians broke Circassian resistance in 1864 with a massive campaign of forced resettlement and expulsion. During a methodical campaign that combed the mountain valleys of Circassia, the Russians forced entire tribes toward the Black Sea and ships that would eventually resettle them in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>99</sup> The expulsion of the Circassians was an extreme example of population control, but it demonstrated the ultimate imperial Russian recognition that an insurgency could not be defeated while the insurgent enjoyed unfettered access to a supportive population.

Question Two: Did the counterinsurgent force achieve unity of effort, and coordinate its military and nonmilitary operations toward a common goal?

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>97</sup> Henze, *Fire and Sword in the Caucasus*, 18-19.

<sup>98</sup> Henze, *Circassia in the Nineteenth Century: The Futile Fight for Freedom*, 243.

<sup>99</sup> King, 92-98.

The organization of Russian forces usually empowered commanders with unity of command; however, the formal existence of unity of command did not guarantee actual ensure unity of effort between military and nonmilitary operations. Tsar Alexander gave his commanders control over military and civil affairs, but the inaccessible terrain and cultural diversity of the Caucasus prevented the early Administrators-in-Chief from developing a coherent regional strategy and directing military and nonmilitary operations toward a common goal.<sup>100</sup> Later Administrators-in-Chief such as Rozen and Golovin saw their control over military and nonmilitary abridged by micromanagement from Nicholas and the Saint Petersburg bureaucracy. Intervention by the central government prevented the Russian leaders in the Caucasus from effectively coordinating and synchronizing the civil and military forces under their command.<sup>101</sup> Finally, official unity of command broke down during two brief periods. Nicholas divested his Administrators-in-Chief of authority over civil and administrative reforms when he established the Gan and Caucasian Commissions in 1837 and 1842.<sup>102</sup> Despite an organization that promoted unity of command, the Russians rarely achieved unity of effort during the Caucasian War; however, the tenures of Ermolov and Vorontsov demonstrated that unity of effort could be achieved in the Caucasus.

Ermolov and Vorontsov achieved unity of effort in military and nonmilitary operations when they commanded Russia's Caucasian forces. Ermolov's official powers as Administrator-in-Chief did not differ from his predecessors, but a combination of personal dynamism and imperial favor allowed him to control every element of Russian national power in the region more effectively than any other Administrator-in-Chief.<sup>103</sup> Similar to Ermolov, Vorontsov enjoyed

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<sup>100</sup> Rhineland, 222-224.

<sup>101</sup> Brooks, 237-241.

<sup>102</sup> Rhineland, 229-231.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

complete empowerment from the Tsar and had the personal competence to direct the civil administration and military forces effectively. Vorontsov also benefited from his position as viceroy. Nicholas recognized that imperial interference in Caucasian affairs was counterproductive, freed Vorontsov from the authority of the Saint Petersburg bureaucracy, and gave his viceroy a free hand in the region.<sup>104</sup> Ermolov and Vorontsov did not always successfully combine military and nonmilitary operations.<sup>105</sup> Both leaders struggled to overcome the cultural complexity and geographic challenges of the Caucasus; however, their control over civil and military instruments of power gave Russian policy a coherence that it lacked under other Russian commanders. The tenures of Ermolov and Vorontsov demonstrated that unity of effort, while possible, required more than an official recognition of unity of command. The Russians only achieved unity of effort when the Tsar personally empowered a commander with a great degree of independence and the commander possessed the personal qualities to take advantage of his independence.

Question Three: Did the counterinsurgent force isolate the insurgents from the population?

Throughout the Caucasian War, the Russians struggled to isolate the rebel mountaineers from the Caucasian population. During the early years of the war, the Russians barely made an effort to limit the insurgent's access to the population. The Russians relied on a system of fortified "lines," manned by a combination of newly arrived imperial forces and Cossack communities who had infiltrated the Caucasus during the previous centuries. The lines served as a buffer between the limited Russian-controlled communities and the North Caucasian mountaineers. The Russian forces maintained control over the Slavic and Cossack lowland population, but they exerted almost no influence over the increasingly restive mountain

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<sup>104</sup> Brooks, 245-247.

<sup>105</sup> Baumann, 9; Brooks, 248; Rhineland, 225.

populations.<sup>106</sup> Ermolov strengthened Russia's defensive posture in the Caucasus, and improved security along the key routes that connected Georgia to Russia proper.<sup>107</sup> He also recognized the vulnerability of Russia's extended line of forts to insurgent attacks and sought to take the fight to the mountaineers. Ermolov built new fortresses close the insurgent mountain strongholds, and used them as bases to launch brutal punitive raids against the mountaineers that he believed would cow the rebels into submission.<sup>108</sup> Despite Ermolov's active campaign to subjugate the mountaineers, he lacked the manpower to establish a constant Russian presence in the mountain strongholds, and relied on intimidation, rather than physical isolation from the insurgents, to control the upland populations.<sup>109</sup> Ermolov's approach to population control was essentially a more aggressive form of the previous Russian strategy. Prior to 1832, the Russians sought to control Russian settlements and docile lowland tribes along key routes, and relied upon limited punitive expeditions to disperse bands of rebel mountaineers without attempting to control the upland tribes. Additionally, the Russians failed to consolidate imperial control over submissive tribes at the fringes of the mountains, and left them vulnerable to rebel predation.<sup>110</sup> During the early years of the Caucasian War, Russia prevented the rebels from seriously challenging its limited sphere of control; however, as the insurgency grew in the late 1820s and early 1830s, and Tsar Nicholas dictated a more aggressive approach.

The Russian campaigns into the heart of Shamil's mountain strongholds during the 1830s and 1840s marked a turning point in Nicholas' Caucasian strategy, but Russia's approach to population control remained largely unchanged. Grabbe's expedition against Shamil's

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<sup>106</sup> King, 39-44.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>108</sup> Baumann, 8-9.

<sup>109</sup> Baumann, 5; Brooks, 229-230.

<sup>110</sup> Baumann, 11.

headquarters at Akhulgo in 1839 succeeded in scattering the insurgent forces and destroying the village, but the Russians failed to establish control over the mountain tribes and allowed Shamil to recover from the defeat and raise a new army.<sup>111</sup> Following Russia's failed campaign to extinguish the reinvigorated Murid movement in 1842, Shamil demonstrated the weakness of imperial control over swaths of previously pacified areas. In 1843, Shamil swept into Avaria and ravaged the region, destroying almost every Russian outpost.<sup>112</sup> Shamil failed to hold onto his gains in Avaria; however, the offensive demonstrated Russia's inability to isolate the Caucasian population from Shamil's fighters. Not only did the Russians fail to isolate the insurgents from their base of support in the mountain tribes, but they also failed to protect pro-Russian villages from reprisals and intimidation.

Vorontsov, under intense pressure from Nicholas, launched a major campaign against Shamil's new headquarters in Dargo in 1845. Similar to the 1839 campaign, the Russians captured the town, but not the rebel leader, and the imperial army suffered tremendously from guerilla attacks during the exfiltration from Dargo.<sup>113</sup> The 1845 expedition failed to deliver the quick victory that the Tsar desired; however, it forced Nicholas to recognize that victory could not be achieved in a pitched battle. Following the disastrous retreat from Dargo, Nicholas gave Vorontsov a free hand in the Caucasus and refrained from dictating strategy to his viceroy.<sup>114</sup> Throughout the previous decades, some Russian officers recognized that subjugation of the Caucasus required a slow and incremental expansion of Russian control.<sup>115</sup> Vorontsov agreed

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 12-17.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>113</sup> Henze, *Fire and Sword in the Caucasus*, 19.

<sup>114</sup> Baumann, 24-25.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

with these assessments and adopted the incremental strategy that featured a systematic and gradual expansion of Russian control in the North Caucasus.

The Russians set limited objectives for their operations and consolidated control over newly subjugated territory to deny insurgent access to the population. Vorontsov's "cut and burn" campaign limited rebel mobility and ability to infiltrate villages, and his road building efforts helped consolidate control over the population by allowing Russian forces easy access to previously inaccessible villages.<sup>116</sup> Finally, the forced resettlements of tribes suspected of supporting the insurgents initiated by Vorontsov and continued by his successors relocated entire villages away from the rebel's mountain strongholds.<sup>117</sup> During the final phase of the Caucasian War, the Russian strategy turned decisively toward isolating the insurgents from the population. Shamil's ready access to the disaffected populations in Chechnya and Dagestan facilitated his dramatic recoveries following from the sackings of Akhulgo and Dargo. Following the disastrous 1845 expedition, the Russians high command finally recognized that defeating the Caucasian insurgents required the permanent separation of the rebels from their supporting population.

Question Four: Did the counterinsurgent force accomplish its political goals?

The Russian Empire's political objectives changed multiple times throughout the Caucasian War. The Russians broadly saw their Empire as a civilizing force, and believed that spreading Orthodoxy was their duty and birthright as successors to the Byzantine Empire.<sup>118</sup> Despite Russia's grandiose vision of its Empire, the initial interest in the Caucasus was considerably more limited. During the early period of the Caucasian War, Russia's primary

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>117</sup> Baumann, 29; King, 94.

<sup>118</sup> Hans Kohn, "Introduction," in *Russian Imperialism: From Ivan the Great to the Revolution*, ed. Taras Hunczak (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 4-5.

interests in the region were limited to protecting of trade routes, maintaining lines of communication with Georgia, and retaining the Caucasus as a buffer against the Turks and Persians.<sup>119</sup> Tsar Alexander committed a correspondingly small amount of resources to the Caucasus; however, the Russians achieved their early, limited political objectives. The Russians failed to subdue discontent in the North Caucasus, but the rebellion never seriously threatened Russia's position in the region.<sup>120</sup> Additionally, the victories over the Persians and Turks in the late 1820s solidified international recognition of Russia's control over the Caucasus and demonstrated the importance of the region to Russia's ambitions along the Black Sea.<sup>121</sup> Despite Russia's successes in the early decades of the nineteenth, Ermolov's harsh policies of retributive raids combined with his attempts to expand Russian control in the North Caucasus Mountains delegitimized local power brokers and encouraged the growth of Muridism.<sup>122</sup> The early Russian strategy in the Caucasus successfully aligned expenditure of effort to political objectives. Russian actions failed to suppress the insurgency in the North Caucasus, but accomplished the economic and imperial goals in the region. Russia's biggest failure during the period was that it allowed, and in many ways facilitated, the growth of Muridism in Chechnya and Dagestan.

The growth of radical Muridism and Tsar Nicholas' centralizing campaign changed Russia's political goals in the late 1820s and early 1830s. An 1826 Chechen uprising that coincided with a Persian invasion alerted the Russians to the threat that Muridism and the simmering unrest in the mountains posed to Russia's regional interests.<sup>123</sup> Nicholas' ambition to centralize and Russify the imperial administration also expanded Russia's political objectives in

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<sup>119</sup> Baumann, 5; King, 26-31.

<sup>120</sup> Baumann, 7.

<sup>121</sup> Kazemzadeh, 251-252.

<sup>122</sup> Brooks, 229-230.

<sup>123</sup> Baumann, 9-12.

the region. Russia's Caucasian forces abandoned their previous tolerance of local norms and customs and embarked on a campaign to fundamentally change Caucasian society.<sup>124</sup> Nicholas increased military and nonmilitary resources to achieve the new political objectives; however, Russia failed to achieve their expanded goals. Despite tactical successes against insurgent forces, the Russians failed to extinguish the flames of Muridism or end the rebellion in Circassia. Shamil frustrated Russian designs to force a decisive battle, and exacted a heavy toll on the imperial army. He threatened Russia's control over lowland areas in the Caucasus and attempted to spread Muridism to the Circassians in the Northwest Caucasus.<sup>125</sup> Nicolas' new nonmilitary goals also went unrealized. Attempts to Russify and centralize the Caucasian administration proved untenable, and had to be abandoned after they almost ground Russian governance in the region to a halt.<sup>126</sup> Russia's Caucasian policy from 1832 to 1845 was ambitious and optimistic. Nicholas aimed to achieve complete military and civil domination, but, by 1845, Russia's position in the region was more tenuous than ever.

During the final phase of the Caucasian War, Russia continued to aim for the complete destruction of the insurgent movements in the North Caucasus, but changed its approach. Vorontsov's indirect and incremental strategy which emphasized isolating the insurgency from the population achieved considerable success. The Russian campaign to consolidate control over supportive tribes and villages, though slow and often brutal, steadily limited Shamil's access to support.<sup>127</sup> Additionally, Vorontsov's measured embrace of local leaders and Caucasian customs and norms in the civil administration ameliorated many Caucasians and further degraded popular

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<sup>124</sup> Rhinelander, 227.

<sup>125</sup> Henze, "Fire and Sword in the Caucasus," 19.

<sup>126</sup> Rhinelander, 230.

<sup>127</sup> Baumann, 35.

support for the insurgents.<sup>128</sup> Finally, the mass resettlement of the Circassians in the final years of the Caucasian War achieved the political goal of ending all major opposition to Russian rule in the region.<sup>129</sup> The Russians accomplished their primary political goals in the final stage of the Caucasian War. The population-centric approach of Vorontsov and his successors gradually drained the insurgency's sources of support, and allowed the Russians to consolidate control throughout the region. The Caucasus remained a challenging frontier, but the apogee of mountaineer resistance to imperial rule had passed.

#### Summary of Case

This case study employed four focused questions to analyze the impact of population-centric counterinsurgency principles in the Caucasian War. The study demonstrated how the Russian use of nonmilitary operations, command structure, ability to isolate insurgents from the population, and political goals evolved throughout the war. The answers to the focused questions will allow comparative analysis between the Caucasian War and the Basmachi rebellion.

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<sup>128</sup> Rhineland, 233.

<sup>129</sup> King, 95-97.

## **The Suppression of the Basmachi Rebellion**

### Introduction

Similar to the Caucasian War, the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion is not well known in the West; however, the existing literature on the conflict provides important insights into Central Asian society and early Soviet counterinsurgency. The scholarly work on the Basmachi rebellion deals with three major, but highly interrelated, themes: the fractured nature of Central Asian society, the tactical challenge posed to the Red Army by the Basmachis, and the Bolshevik campaign to spread communism to the local population of Central Asia. The literature rarely deals with any single theme in a vacuum, and a consensus exists within the scholarly work that each major theme plays an important role in explaining the origins of the Basmachi insurgency and the Soviet response.

The fractured nature of Central Asian society shaped the Basmachi movement and frustrated the Soviet struggle to rapidly defeat the insurgency and consolidate power in the region. Roy and Khalid traced the origins of the divisions within Central Asian society. Clans and tribes dominated traditional rural Central Asian life, and Islamic practice reflected communal values as much as theological or scriptural precepts.<sup>130</sup> Life in the countryside contrasted sharply with urban life in the cities that sprung up along the Amu Darya River. The cities were an integral part of the Muslim world and contained respected centers of Islamic learning.<sup>131</sup> Despite sharing a common Muslim identity, the city and countryside pursued distinctly different forms of Islam and legal systems. The Turkic tribes in the hinterlands maintained the tribal law, or *adat*, and followed the highly individualized teachings of the Sufi holy men who first brought Islam to their clan, while the cosmopolitan and orthodox theology of the conservative *ulama* and *shariat* law

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<sup>130</sup> Oliver Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 12-13; Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 21-22.

<sup>131</sup> Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 25-26.

dominated the cities.<sup>132</sup> Following the conquest of Turkestan and emasculation of the nominally independent khanates of Kokand and Khiva, the imperial Russians chose to minimize intervention in Central Asian society and did not challenge the existing adat and shariat divide. The Russian legal policy deepened the rural and urban divide by codifying the parallel application of adat and shariat law.<sup>133</sup> The divide between loosely autonomous tribes in the countryside and relatively cosmopolitan urban populations, compounded by divisive imperial policies, prevented the construction of a cohesive Central Asian society prior to the arrival of the Bolsheviks.

Fractures in Central Asian society played a critical role in the early stages of Communist rule and throughout the ensuing Basmachi rebellion. Olcott and Baumann described the struggle for power in Turkestan following the Bolshevik Revolution. Following the collapse of imperial governance, local Russian communists established the Tashkent Soviet that competed with the Muslim-dominated Kokand Autonomous Government for power in the cities.<sup>134</sup> The power struggle in the cities left the tribes in the countryside ungoverned, and allowed local Basmachi commanders, the Kurbashi, to seize control of the countryside.<sup>135</sup> Basmachi dominance in the countryside reinforced social divisions. The Basmachis lacked a unified organization and structure, and bands of outlaws or tribal fighters constituted the first Basmachi groups.<sup>136</sup> The willingness of some Kurbashi to ally with the Bolsheviks when a rival Basmachi band threatened their interests attested to the fractious nature of the Basmachi movement and Central Asian society.<sup>137</sup> The deep divisions between town and country and among the rebel groups influenced

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<sup>132</sup> Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 27, 31-33.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>134</sup> Olcott, 354.

<sup>135</sup> Baumann, 94-95.

<sup>136</sup> Baumann, 96.

<sup>137</sup> Roy, 46-47.

the Soviet counterinsurgency campaign against the Basmachi. The fractures within Central Asian society shaped the struggle at a tactical level and influenced the efforts to Sovietize the region.

The disorganized and fractious nature of the Basmachi movement combined with the mountainous terrain of Central Asia dictated the contours of the Basmachi rebellion. Khalid described the highly localized early stages of the rebellion in the Ferghana Valley when small, autonomous groups of fighters sought to defend their food supply and traditional communal life from communist encroachment.<sup>138</sup> Baumann and Olcott demonstrated the limitations of Basmachi unity. The Kurbashi made common cause under the leadership of an effective and charismatic leader such as Madamin Bek and Enver Pasha several times throughout the rebellion. However, the competition between rival Kurbashi, compounded by the social and religious tensions between tribal leaders and urban Basmachi supporters, made the alliances fragile. The brief moments of unity among the Basmachi rarely survived defeat on the battlefield or the death of the unifying leader, and the individual bands of Basmachi dispersed to defend their home mountain valleys using guerrilla tactics.<sup>139</sup> Ritter's account of Ibrahim Bek's abortive invasion of Tajikistan demonstrated the Basmachi's ability to raise a large, yet fragile, "Army of Islam" as late as 1929 that capitalized on popular discontent with the Soviets but could not sustain major operations following a tactical set-back.<sup>140</sup> The Basmachi inability to forge a unified resistance against the Bolsheviks proved to be a strength and a weakness for the movement. The Basmachi irregular organization capitalized on the inaccessible terrain and mitigated against the conventional superiority of the Red Army; however, their disunity prevented the movement from coordinating efforts across disparate groups and attacking Bolshevik power centers in the cities.

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<sup>138</sup> Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 54-55.

<sup>139</sup> Baumann, 104-106, 113; Olcott, 355-356.

<sup>140</sup> William S. Ritter, "Revolt in the Mountains: Fuzail Maksum and the Occupation of Garm, Spring 1929," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 25, no. 4 (October, 1990): 548.

The overwhelmingly irregular nature of the Basmachi rebellion forced the Red Army to adapt their military organization and tactics. Baumann described the evolution of the Soviet forces in Central Asia as they sought to counter the mobile guerilla of the Basmachi. The early forces fielded by the Tashkent Soviet proved incapable of extending communist control outside of the major cities. Once the Red Army defeated the White Russians in Western Siberia and restored Moscow's link to Turkestan, the central government dispatched a Turkestan Commission including the capable Mikhail Frunze to take stock of the situation and end the insurgency. Frunze quickly set about improving the equipping and organization of the Red forces in Central Asia. He identified the necessity of cavalry units to pursue the bands of Basmachi into their mountain hideouts following raids, and recruited "Soviet Basmachi" units from the local populace that included "converted" Basmachi.<sup>141</sup> The Red Army analyzed their early campaigns against the Basmachi in the Ferghana Valley and adapted their tactics to the environment and enemy. They paid particular attention to the challenge of mountain warfare, the development of flexible, highly mobile units, and the occupation of key population centers with sufficient force.<sup>142</sup> Lageard analyzed Central Asian Red Army journals published from 1920-1922 and found that the authors grappled with practical concerns such as fighting and sustaining the force over the difficult Central Asian terrain and integrating Muslim soldiers into the Red Army while interpreting the strategic context of the operation through the lens of Marxism.<sup>143</sup> The Bolshevik's focus on the supposed economic and class origins of the conflict directly informed their campaign to undermine the roots of the insurgency through Sovietization.

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<sup>141</sup> Baumann, 96-97.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 100-103.

<sup>143</sup> Helene Aymen Lageard, "The Revolt of the Basmachi According to Red Army Journals (1920-1922)," *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1987): 2-7, 13-16.

The Bolsheviks did not seek simple control over Central Asia; rather, they sought to bring the Revolution to the region and reorganize society along Marxist principles. Khalid contrasted the imperial Russian tolerance of local customs with the Bolshevik goal of spreading socialism to the region and using Central Asia as a gateway to spread Marxism to the West's Asian colonies.<sup>144</sup> Olcott demonstrated how the coercive approach to early Marxist reforms by the Tashkent Soviet such as nationalizing all clerical lands that caused massive popular discontent and spurred the early Basmachi movement.<sup>145</sup> Baumann described the shift in Soviet policy that followed Frunze's recognition that undermining the popular support for the Basmachi was crucial to the movement's defeat. Under Frunze, the campaign to Sovietize Turkestan did not cease, but the pace of Marxist reforms slowed to reduce popular outrage against the Bolsheviks.<sup>146</sup> Riordan examined the Soviet campaign to suppress the Basmachis in the Ferghana Valley during the early 1920s. He argued that Frunze used of multiple forms of national power, tempered by concessions to local religion and customs, to degrade support for the Basmachis while cultivating economic growth and modernization in the region.<sup>147</sup> Despite Frunze's initial conciliatory approach, the Bolsheviks remained committed to reordering Central Asian society, and they launched a full-scale assault on traditional society and religious institutions once Basmachi resistance waned in the middle of the decade.<sup>148</sup> Penati and Ritter argued that the aggressive mid-1920s Soviet policies aimed to simultaneously defeat the Basmachi, increase control over the lands of Central

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<sup>144</sup> Adeeb Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspectives," *Slavic Review*, vol. 65, no. 2 (Summer, 2006): 237-238.

<sup>145</sup> Olcott, 352-355.

<sup>146</sup> Baumann, 103.

<sup>147</sup> John P. Riordan, "Red DIME: Dissecting the Bolshevik Liquidation Campaign in the Ferghana Valley against the Basmachi Resistance" (School of Advanced Military Studies Monograph, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2008), 2, 11-13, 27-33.

<sup>148</sup> Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization," 242.

Asia, and reorder local society along socialist principles.<sup>149</sup> The policies sparked popular uproar and reinvigorated the Basmachi movement; however, the intervention into Central Asian society allowed the Bolsheviks to eventually control the population and deny the Basmachis meaningful popular support.<sup>150</sup> The Soviet objectives in Central Asia extended beyond simple political control and resource extraction. They exported the Revolution and sought to modernize the region along Marxist principles. The Sovietization of Central Asia encouraged armed rebellion, but it also facilitated the control of the population that helped separate the Basmachi from their base of popular support.

The scholarly literature on the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion demonstrates the complexity of the Soviet counterinsurgency campaign. The Red Army faced an elusive and decentralized enemy that exploited inaccessible terrain and drew support from the local population. The Bolsheviks also attempted to reshape Central Asian society and integrate it into the Soviet Union. The Sovietization scheme fanned the flames of rebellion and added complexity to the struggle against the Basmachis; however, the Bolsheviks' emphasis on Marxist modernization focused their attention on the local population and made them sensitive to civil considerations throughout the counterinsurgency campaign.

## Analysis

The four focused questions will form the structure of the analysis of the Basmachi rebellion. The questions will identify the presence of population-centric counterinsurgency principles in the Soviet counterinsurgency campaign against the Basmachis, and establish a basis to evaluate the relationship between population-centric practices and counterinsurgent success.

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<sup>149</sup> Beatrice Penati, "The Reconquest of East Bukhara: The Struggle against the Basmachi as a prelude to Sovietization," *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 26, no. 4 (December 2007): 524-527.

<sup>150</sup> Penati, 534; Ritter, 550-555, 563-567.

Finally, the answers to the focus questions will provide the foundation for the comparative analysis between the two case studies.

Question One: Did the counterinsurgent force use nonmilitary operations as an integral part of the counterinsurgency campaign?

Nonmilitary operations played an integral role throughout the Bolshevik counterinsurgency campaign against the Basmachis in Central Asia. The importance of nonmilitary operations agreed with Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Marx argued that class struggle defined human history, and Lenin asserted that Marx's dialectical progression toward humanity's final stage, communism, required the forceful intervention of a cohort of revolutionaries.<sup>151</sup> The Bolsheviks viewed warfare as an extension of the struggle between classes, and believed that military operations served the broader purpose of societal and economic transformation. The dominant role of economic identity in communist ideology led the Soviet forces to define their struggle with the Basmachis in economic terms, and they assumed that if they created an aware proletarian class in Central Asia then the insurgency would naturally fade away.<sup>152</sup> Similar to their imperial forbearers, the Bolsheviks sought to develop and enlighten benighted "nationalities" in the Soviet Union; however, they pursued their civilizing mission more systematically and more aggressively than the imperial Russians.<sup>153</sup> Communism's interpretation of history, warfare, and class development framed the Soviet Union's response to the Basmachi rebellion. The Bolsheviks adapted and changed their approach to nonmilitary operations

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<sup>151</sup> Vladimir Lenin, "What is to be Done?" in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975), 07-114.

<sup>152</sup> Lageard, 2.

<sup>153</sup> Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Summer, 1994): 418-421.

throughout the struggle, but civil factors always played a crucial role in their counterinsurgency effort.

Following the Revolution, local Bolshevik sympathizers in Tashkent embarked on a program of reforms designed to promote communist ideology and subvert traditional Central Asian society. The Jadids and a portion of the ulama initially supported the Bolsheviks' modernizing efforts and educational reforms; however, a purge of non-Russian officials within the Tashkent Soviet fractured the fledgling alliance and stoked anti-Bolshevik sentiment within the native Central Asian population. The Basmachis capitalized on the Tashkent Soviet's antagonism toward Islam, and opposition to Bolshevik rule increased in the countryside outside of Tashkent.<sup>154</sup> The Basmachi movement was extremely diverse and, in its earliest days, included as many brigands as freedom fighters, but the Tashkent Soviet's suppression of Islam pushed many Turkestanis into the rebel camp and cast the Basmachi as defenders of Islam to much of the local population.<sup>155</sup> The Tashkent Soviet sought to forcibly transform Central Asian society through a number of nonmilitary operations; however, the Soviet's efforts largely backfired and encouraged active resistance within the native population.

For months following the Tashkent Soviet's ascension to power, the Central Asian Bolsheviks were isolated from their ideological brethren in Russia by White Russian forces, and the Soviet received scant oversight or support from Moscow. In May 1919, Red forces broke through the White Army and by the summer arms and supplies were flowing from Russia to Turkestan.<sup>156</sup> Opening the lines of communication between Moscow and Tashkent also allowed the central Party leadership to exercise control over the communists in Central Asia and opened the way for a more nuanced approach to nonmilitary operations. In October 1919, the Party

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<sup>154</sup> Olcott, 354-355.

<sup>155</sup> Baumann, 95; Lageard, 21.

<sup>156</sup> Olcott, 356.

leadership dispatched a commission to study the causes of the Basmachi rebellion. The results of the commission led the Politburo to disband the Tashkent Soviet and conclude that defeating the Basmachi insurgency required winning the support of the local population. The Bolshevik's sought to improve their standing with the native population through economic aid and tax reform in line with the New Economic Policy, and they attempted to resolve the primary Turkestani grievance, the communist assault on Islam, by making limited concessions such as the restoration of some Sharia courts.<sup>157</sup> New Bolshevik leaders in Turkestan, such as M. V. Frunze, did not reject the Tashkent Soviet's guiding assumption that cultivating communism and consolidating Soviet control in Central Asia required social transformation, but they recognized that an overly aggressive attack on local norms and customs were counterproductive and threatened the Soviet Union's long-term goals in the region.

The Bolsheviks in the newly minted Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic limited their coercive intervention into Central Asian society while the Basmachi rebellion raged in the Ferghana Valley. The Bolsheviks, however, continued nonmilitary operations designed to propagandize and influence the local population. Far from the coercive approach of the Tashkent Soviet, the fully developed Bolshevik ideology approached the issue of spreading communism to non-Russian "nationalities" pragmatically and subtly. The central Party leadership believed that all ethnic and national groups needed communism to reach its "final destination," but they believed that differing levels of development and cultural heritage made some groups less prepared to adopt modern socialism.<sup>158</sup> Therefore, the Bolshevik leadership, particularly Lenin, believed that the Party needed to embrace the customs of each nationality in an effort to push each group toward developing into a fully communist society.<sup>159</sup> The Bolsheviks recognized that

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 357.

<sup>158</sup> Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization," 238.

<sup>159</sup> Slezkine, 418-419.

cultural understanding made governance and nonmilitary operations more effective, and supported the long-term goal of spreading communism to the diverse peoples within the former Russian Empire.

Following the dissolution of the Tashkent Soviet, Bolshevik authorities embraced Central Asian customs in an attempt to build trust with the local population. In 1921, they undertook a wide-scale ethnographic study to improve their knowledge of Central Asian society and culture.<sup>160</sup> The Red Army sought to develop culturally aware officers who could effectively interact with the local population and build popular support for the new regime.<sup>161</sup> Bolshevik authorities also attempted to influence their new subjects by synthesizing communist propaganda with local customs and establishing “a network of Red Teahouses, Red Yurts, and Red Corners” to influence and mobilize the local population.<sup>162</sup> The Red Army’s embrace of local customs and norms guided their nonmilitary operations and demonstrated the importance that the Soviets placed on gaining popular support in the struggle against the Basmachis.

The Soviet Union’s nonmilitary operations in the early 1920s attempted to conciliate the local population to the communist authorities while the Basmachi rebellion threatened its control over the region; however, the Bolsheviks dramatically changed their approach once the insurgency lost momentum. By 1922 the Red Army suppressed major Basmachi operations in the Ferghana Valley and defeated the charismatic pan-Turkic leader, Enver Pasha, who attempted to unify the disparate Basmachi factions in Ferghana and the former khanates of Bukhara and Khiva.<sup>163</sup> The improved security situation allowed the Bolsheviks to consolidate control in the region, and the focus of their nonmilitary operations transitioned from making Soviet rule

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<sup>160</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 59.

<sup>161</sup> Riordan, 22.

<sup>162</sup> Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization,” 241.

<sup>163</sup> Baumann, 106-107, 112-113; Olcott, 357-359.

palatable to the local population to “modernizing” Central Asian society and enforcing communist political, economic, and social principles.<sup>164</sup> Starting in 1926, the Bolsheviks renewed the crackdown on Islam by seizing clerical land, closing madrassas and Islamic courts, and persecuting both the conservative ulama and the reformist Jadids.<sup>165</sup> The Soviets also created native councils to introduce socialist principles at the local and village level and administer social programs such as famine relief.<sup>166</sup> Finally, Bolshevik officials conducted targeted resettlements and collectivization to break the influence of tribal and local leaders throughout Soviet Central Asia.<sup>167</sup> The newly coercive tactics of the communist regime sparked widespread discontent and renewed the Basmachi movement; however, it allowed the Soviets to exert influence at the local level by disrupting traditional power structures.<sup>168</sup>

Soviet nonmilitary operations during the final years of the Basmachi rebellion bore many similarities to the civil policies of the Tashkent Soviet. Unlike the Tashkent Soviet, the later administration embraced native communists, but both regimes used nonmilitary operations to limit the influence of Islam in public life and transform traditional Central Asian society. The post-1926 crackdown proved as inflammatory to the local population as the policies of the Tashkent Soviet, but greater Soviet resources in the region and superior execution of civil and military operations allowed the Bolsheviks to contain the renewed Basmachi movement in the late 1920s.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 71.

<sup>165</sup> Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization,” 242.

<sup>166</sup> Penati, 524.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 527, 532.

<sup>168</sup> Ritter, 552-553.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 575.

Question Two: Did the counterinsurgent force achieve unity of effort, and coordinate its military and nonmilitary operations toward a common goal?

The early Tashkent Soviet faced many of the same problems as the early imperial Russian administration in the Caucasus. They lacked the strength to project influence outside of the walls of Tashkent, and the organization's ad hoc construction made creating a coherent governing structure difficult. Although the Tashkent Soviet lacked the hallmarks of mature civil and military authority, it demonstrated a rudimentary form of unity of effort by using violence to support the political objective of promoting socialist principles and suppressing traditional Central Asian social norms.<sup>170</sup> The situation improved following the arrival of Frunze and the opening of communications between Tashkent and Moscow. Frunze improved the organization and tactics of the Red Army and enjoyed success on the battlefield against the Basmachis; however, he recognized the importance of improving relations with the local population, and took several steps, such as reopening bazaars and distributing grain, to conciliate the civilian population to the Bolshevik regime.<sup>171</sup> Frunze enjoyed a great deal of formal and informal power in Soviet Turkestan, but Moscow did not invest him with unfettered unity of command.

Once the Red Army defeated the White Army isolating Central Asia and established Turkestan's connection to Moscow, the Soviet political apparatus slowly became ingrained in the region. Initially the Provisional Central Committee that included Russian and native Bolsheviks replaced the Tashkent Soviet, and the new administration concluded that "political disarmament," coupled with military force, was required to defeat the Basmachi.<sup>172</sup> Later, the Central Committee in Moscow established a Central Asian Bureau, and the Central Asian Bureau, in turn, empowered the Central Commission for the struggle against the Basmachi to coordinate all civil

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<sup>170</sup> Olcott, 354-356.

<sup>171</sup> Baumann, 96-97.

<sup>172</sup> Olcott, 357.

and military efforts against the insurgents. The Central Commission developed local revolutionary committees consisting of native Bolshevik leaders to administer villages and localities. The Soviet bureaucracy could be inefficient, and the local population occasionally opposed the new power brokers, particularly the village level revolutionary committees; however, the Soviet administration did provide a forum for civil and military leaders to coordinate actions and synchronize civil and military efforts.<sup>173</sup>

The Red Army proved particularly receptive to supporting nonmilitary operations because Marxist ideology asserted that military conflicts were inherently rooted in class warfare. Red Army journals published in Central Asia during the Basmachi uprising discussed the importance of economic development and addressing local grievances alongside articles dedicated to the tactics of mountain warfare.<sup>174</sup> Although no Soviet leader enjoyed the autonomy that Vorontsov did during the Caucasian War, the common Marxist philosophy of civilian and military leaders allowed the Red Army and the civil administration to forge a degree of unity of effort.

Question Three: Did the counterinsurgent force isolate the insurgents from the population?

The Bolsheviks bid to isolate the rural Central Asian population from the Basmachis faced many of the same challenges that confounded the imperial Russians in the Caucasus. The rough mountainous terrain and the inaccessible villages provided the insurgents with bases of support outside of the reach of the Red Army throughout the struggle.<sup>175</sup> The Tashkent Soviet's ability to isolate the population from the Basmachi was particularly limited, and the rebels

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<sup>173</sup> Penati, 524-525.

<sup>174</sup> Lageard, 21.

<sup>175</sup> Baumann, 100.

enjoyed freedom of action anywhere outside of the walls of Tashkent.<sup>176</sup> Following the arrival of the Red Army in Turkestan, the Bolshevik ability to project power into the countryside improved. The Red Army developed a strategy of incremental expansion that focused on first securing key population centers, railway hubs, and industrial centers and then striking at Basmachi strongholds. Following a successful offensive into a Basmachi stronghold, the Red Army would transition control of the area to civilian authorities.<sup>177</sup> Despite the measured success of the new Bolshevik strategy and the suppression of the major Basmachi uprisings under Madamin Bek in Ferghana and Enver Pasha in Bukhara, the insurgents still found pockets of support throughout the countryside.<sup>178</sup> By the 1922, the Bolsheviks proclaimed victory on the major “fronts” in the struggle against the Basmachi; however, the movement persisted, albeit in a highly localized fashion, throughout the region.

Following the successes of the early 1920s, the Bolsheviks attempted to consolidate their control over the entire region. The Central Commission sought to isolate the Central Asian population from the Basmachis through a combination of military action and social programs such as famine relief. The Bolshevik intervention into the affairs of towns and villages throughout the region improved the connection between Central Asia and the rest of the Soviet Union and degraded the insurgents’ freedom of action.<sup>179</sup> However, the initial success of an incursion of Bukharan Basmachis based out of Afghanistan into Soviet Tajikistan in 1929 demonstrated the difficulty of isolating the rebels from the villages in mountainous Central Asia. The Bolshevik crackdown on traditional Central Asian society during the mid and late 1920s stoked local discontent and created a fertile ground for an anti-Soviet movement. Popular discontent with

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<sup>176</sup> Olcott, 355.

<sup>177</sup> Baumann, 101.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 107, 113.

<sup>179</sup> Penati, 530-534.

Soviet policies enabled the penetration of a lead detachment under Fuzail Maksum into Tajikistan; however, the penetration of Soviet civil and military forces throughout the region allowed Bolshevik authorities to blunt Maksum's initial successes and defeat the main body of the Basmachi invasion force.<sup>180</sup> Throughout the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion, the Bolsheviks struggled to effectively isolate remote towns and villages from insurgent infiltration. Although they rarely succeeded in stamping out all Basmachi support, the systematic strategy of extending Soviet civil and military power into the countryside from the villages provided the Red forces with the flexibility and operational reach to prevent the major Basmachi uprisings experienced during the early 1920s.

Question Four: Did the counterinsurgent force accomplish its political goals?

The Bolsheviks failed to accomplish their ideological goal of developing Central Asian society into a perfect communist society; however, they did achieve their more modest goal of integrating Central Asia into the Soviet Union. Islam remained a part of Central Asian identity, but the ulema and Jadids ceased to play a significant role in local and regional politics.<sup>181</sup> The Central Asian republics fully embraced the Soviet system and became politically and economically dependent upon the Soviet Union. The strength of Moscow's dominance over Central Asia became apparent decades after the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion when the Central Asian republics were the only Soviet republics to oppose independence following the dissolution of Soviet Union.<sup>182</sup> The Bolsheviks' population-centric approach to counterinsurgency in Central Asia was costly and fraught with many short-term setbacks. Their intervention into almost every aspect of Central Asian society threatened the traditional power structure and

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<sup>180</sup> Ritter, 562-568.

<sup>181</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 82-83.

<sup>182</sup> Roy, 125-130.

empowered the Basmachi rebellion; however, the civil and military apparatus that the Bolsheviks created throughout Central Asia ultimately formed the foundation for decades of unopposed Soviet control of the region.

#### Summary of Case

This case study employed four focused questions to analyze the impact of population-centric counterinsurgency principles during the Soviet suppression of the Basmachi rebellion. The study demonstrated how the Soviets attempted to use nonmilitary operations throughout the conflict to transform Central Asian society. It examined the importance unity of effort between civil and military efforts to the Bolshevik goals of isolating the insurgency from the population and consolidating communist control over the region. The answers to the focused questions will allow comparative analysis between the Caucasian War and the Basmachi rebellion.

## Findings and Analysis

The Caucasian War and the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion provided multiple opportunities to test key concepts in population-centric warfare. The evidence provided by the structured, focused comparison between the case studies suggests that synchronizing military and nonmilitary operations through unity of effort contributed positively to counterinsurgent victory. The imperial Russians and the Bolsheviks both experienced considerable setbacks during their counterinsurgency operations, and their population-centric efforts often resulted in negative unintended consequences. However, the execution of nonmilitary operations and unity of effort between civil and military authority assisted both counterinsurgent forces isolate the population from the insurgency and achieve their political goals.

Nonmilitary operations played a crucial role in the victory of both the imperial Russians and the Soviets; however, the case studies also demonstrated the costs and risks that can be associated with nonmilitary operations in support of a counterinsurgency. Russia's varied approaches to combating the mountaineers during the Caucasian War illustrated the importance of nonmilitary operations to counterinsurgent success. In the early years of the conflict, the lack of resources committed to nonmilitary operations reflected the general Russian inattentiveness to the Caucasian theater.<sup>183</sup> Nicholas I decided to prosecute the war more aggressively from 1832 to 1845, but the Russians focused most of their energy on military operations and limited their nonmilitary efforts to draconian administrative reforms. The imperial army scored a number of tactical victories over the Murids during this period, but Shamil's access to the population in the Northeast Caucasus allowed him to raise new forces, harass the Russian Army, and increase his influence among mountain tribes.<sup>184</sup> Nicholas' belief that Muridism could be destroyed through pitched battles placed the Russian counterinsurgent forces on poor footing to address local

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<sup>183</sup> Baumann, 5-7.

<sup>184</sup> Rhineland, 230.

grievances, prevent the local population from supporting the insurgents, or protect cooperative tribes from rebel intimidation. They attempted to end the insurgency through purely military means and failed to account for the true nature of the insurgency. The Russians did not recognize that Shamil's influence throughout the mountain tribes, not his fielded forces, was the strength of the Murid movement.

Russian fortunes improved when Nicholas loosened the reigns on Vorontsov and allowed his viceroy to pursue an indirect approach against the rebels after the disastrous 1845 campaign. Vorontsov and his successors matched their incremental military gains with nonmilitary operations designed to consolidate control over the Caucasian population. The Russian nonmilitary operations included conciliatory measures, such as administrative reform, economic investment, and cultural programs and coercive measures, such as forced resettlements.<sup>185</sup> The range of nonmilitary operations during the final stage of the Caucasian War were diverse; however, they were all aimed at the common goal choking the Murid insurgency by denying Shamil access to his formerly supportive population. After nearly half of a century of chronic under investment in civil affairs, the Russians learned that they could not control the Caucasus without first controlling the restive population in the North Caucasus, and a robust nonmilitary effort proved a critical factor in establishing the decisive population control that led to victory.

Unlike the imperial Russians in the Caucasus, the Soviets placed a heavy emphasis on nonmilitary operations from the outset of their suppression of the Basmachi rebellion. Marxist ideology framed military conflict in an economic, social, and cultural context, and, as a result, Bolshevik leaders naturally understood the importance of nonmilitary operations to military success.<sup>186</sup> The Bolshevik record of nonmilitary operations was uneven. The Tashkent Soviet's aggressive campaign against traditional Central Asian society backfired and encouraged the

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<sup>185</sup> Brooks, 86-87.

<sup>186</sup> Lageard, 2.

growth of the Basmachi movement; however, the conciliatory measures undertaken by Frunze played a crucial role in blunting the momentum of the Basmachi movement in the early 1920s.<sup>187</sup> Conversely, the crackdown on Islam and the rudimentary Sovietization initiated in 1926 caused considerable popular discontent, but was instrumental in consolidating Bolshevik control in the region and defeating the remnants of Basmachi resistance.<sup>188</sup> The Soviets made mistakes in their nonmilitary operations, but they never doubted the importance of nonmilitary operations to defeating the insurgency.

One of the Bolsheviks' chief strengths throughout the struggle was their ability to adapt their approach to civil affairs and nonmilitary operations based upon changes in the environment and previous failures. The Bolsheviks also benefited from a shared philosophy that assumed that civil considerations played an important role in any military struggle. In contrast to the imperial Russians, the Soviets never debated the importance of influencing the local population through nonmilitary operations; instead, they simply refined the best way to apply nonmilitary operations to support the operational and strategic goals of defeating the Basmachis and integrating Central Asia into the Soviet Union. The application of nonmilitary power did not guarantee victory to either the imperial Russians or the Soviets. The Imperial Army and the Red Army both overcame significant military challenges to secure victory over the rebel Caucasian mountaineers and the Basmachis, but both armies' military success relied heavily on the population control enabled through nonmilitary operations.

Despite the importance of nonmilitary operations to counterinsurgent success, the case studies demonstrated the risks and costs associated with nonmilitary operations in counterinsurgency operations. The local population often perceived nonmilitary operations as a threat to their traditional way of life, and that perception could cause a nascent insurgent

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<sup>187</sup> Olcott, 357.

<sup>188</sup> Ritter, 575.

movement to gain momentum as previously neutral communities rallied in defense of their communal values. Counterinsurgent intervention into local society through nonmilitary operations was particularly risky when the intervention occurred without sufficient resources or political will to weather the storm of increased opposition and build upon the initial intervention to consolidate control over the local population.

Ermolov departed from the relatively passive approach of his predecessors who sought to contain the insurgency and secure key lowland towns and roads. His rudimentary attempts at population control at the fringes of the northeast Caucasian mountain strongholds pushed many mountaineers toward the Murid movement when they saw that their traditional tribal leaders were unwilling to stand up to the Russians.<sup>189</sup> Ermolov's aggressive policies were forceful enough to pose a threat to the tribes in the Northeast Caucasus, but not forceful enough to secure Russian control over the entire region or threaten the Murids in their safe-havens. As a result, a large portion of the local population became radicalized at a time when Ermolov lacked the capacity to seriously contest their freedom of action. He stirred up the hornets without possessing the means to destroy the nest.

A similar chain of events played out under the Tashkent Soviet in the early days of Bolshevik rule in Turkestan. The Soviet departed from the non-interventionist policies of the previous imperial administration in Turkestan and sought to suppress Islam and reshape local society in accordance with Marxist principles.<sup>190</sup> Despite their ambitious campaign for societal transformation, the Bolsheviks in the Tashkent Soviet lacked the ability to project power outside of the urban centers. As a result, their assault on Islam drove many Central Asians to support the fledgling Basmachi movement that enjoyed complete freedom of action in the countryside.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Rhineland, 226-227.

<sup>190</sup> Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization," 236.

<sup>191</sup> Olcott, 354-355.

Instead of cultivating Marxism in Central Asia, the Tashkent Soviet's nonmilitary efforts solidified opposition to Bolshevik rule and buoyed popular support for an insurgency that they did not possess the means to effectively oppose.

The experiences of Ermolov in the Caucasus and the Tashkent Soviet in Central Asia demonstrated the risk of a counterinsurgent force conducting aggressive nonmilitary operations with limited resources. Both cases illustrated the importance of matching the level of nonmilitary intervention into a local society with the counterinsurgent's capacity to manage blowback against the intervention and consolidate gains achieved by the nonmilitary operations. Despite the failure of Ermolov and the Tashkent Soviet to properly align the intensity of nonmilitary operations with available resources, the case studies included many instances where the imperial Russians and Bolsheviks achieved a proper balance. The earliest Russian administrations in the Caucasus enjoyed fewer resources than did Ermolov; however, their limited control over the lowlands did not threaten the traditional culture and power structures in the mountains, and opposition to Russian presence in the Caucasus remained limited and manageable.<sup>192</sup> Similarly, the Bolshevik administration in Central Asia immediately following the dissolution of the Tashkent Soviet recognized the tenuous position of Soviet power in the region and attempted to undercut popular support for the Basmachi by reversing the most inflammatory civil policies enacted under the Tashkent Soviet.<sup>193</sup> The Bolsheviks did not completely disavow nonmilitary operations during the early 1920s, but they moderated their short-term ambitions for civil change because they recognized that fundamental social transformation could not be achieved with the limited resources available. The measured success of the Russians in the early years of the Caucasian War and the Bolsheviks in the early 1920s demonstrated the importance of aligning the intensity of nonmilitary operations with available resources. Neither force achieved complete victory over

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<sup>192</sup> Baumann, 7-8.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 103.

the opposing insurgent movement, but both forces contained the insurgency largely because their nonmilitary efforts did not needlessly provoke popular discontent and push the local population toward the insurgent cause.

The concluding stages of the Caucasian War and the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion represented periods when the imperial Russians and the Bolsheviks successfully matched aggressive nonmilitary operations with expansive counterinsurgent capabilities and resources. Vorontsov enjoyed unprecedented military power to support his incremental expansion of Russian power into Shamil's mountain stronghold and solidify Russian civil control over previously untouched population centers.<sup>194</sup> Similarly, the Bolsheviks' resumption of aggressive nonmilitary operations designed to transform Central Asian society in 1926 sparked popular discontent, but the Bolsheviks now had the capacity to defeat the reinvigorated Basmachi movement and continue the Sovietization process.<sup>195</sup> The case studies indicate that aggressive nonmilitary operations are necessary if a counterinsurgent force seeks decisive victory over an insurgency; however, they also demonstrate that nonmilitary operations may not achieve the desired results without a costly commitment of civil and military resources. Additionally, the case studies also suggest that if a counterinsurgent force is unable or unwilling to commit significant resources to a counterinsurgency campaign, then aggressive nonmilitary operations may be ineffective or counterproductive.

The Caucasian War and the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion support the contention that unity of effort between civil and military efforts is a critical requirement of successful counterinsurgency operations. The Russian success in the final stage of the Caucasian War largely relied upon the ability of Vorontsov and successive viceroys to synchronize military and nonmilitary operations without external interference, and the cooperation between Bolshevik

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>195</sup> Ritter, 552-553.

civilian authorities and Red Army officers in forums such as the Central Commission enabled mutual support between civil and military efforts.<sup>196</sup> In both cases, effective unity of effort allowed the counterinsurgent forces to directly combat the insurgents and secure the civilian population through military operations while degrading popular support for the insurgency and integrating the local population into the counterinsurgent state through nonmilitary operations. The imperial Russians and the Bolsheviks ultimately achieved unity of effort; however, the case studies demonstrated some of the impediments to effectively synchronizing civil and military operations.

The Russian Caucasian commanders enjoyed official unity of command throughout the majority of the Caucasian War; however, several factors prevented them from achieving effective unity of effort during much of the conflict. Practical limitations imposed by the physical and human terrain prevented early Administrators-in-Chief from forging a coherent strategy for military and nonmilitary operations, and, during most of the reign of Nicholas I, micromanagement from Saint Petersburg divested the Russian commanders in the Caucasus of much of their freedom of action and actual control over civil and military matters.<sup>197</sup> Only under Ermolov, Vorontsov, and his successors as viceroy did the Russians achieve unity of effort. The failure of so many Administrators-in-Chief to achieve unity of effort demonstrated that official unity of command did not guarantee actual unity of effort. Instead, other factors such as the support of the Tsar and the personal abilities of the commander determined if the Russians successfully synchronized civil and military operations.

The Bolshevik method of synchronizing civil and military efforts in Central Asia differed from the imperial Russian approach in the Caucasus; however, it generally produced superior results. The Bolsheviks employed a robust bureaucracy with established roles for civil

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<sup>196</sup> Penati, 524-525.

<sup>197</sup> Brooks, 237-241; Rhineland, 229-231.

and military authorities, and, as a result, rarely achieved unity of command. Despite the separation between civil and military officials, the Bolsheviks shared a common communist ideology that transcended the civil military divide. The shared ideology formed a common understanding of the challenges posed by the Basmachis and facilitated cooperation between civilian and Red Army leadership.<sup>198</sup> The benefits of common ideology extended to the relationship between the Bolshevik leaders in Central Asia and the Party leaders in Moscow. After the dissolution of the Tashkent Soviet, the Bolshevik leaders in Central Asia, particularly Frunze, shared a similar vision with the central Party leaders. Even Lenin's micromanagement of some nonmilitary reforms reinforced rather than disrupted the efforts of local officials.<sup>199</sup> The Bolsheviks founded built their unity of effort upon a shared ideology and vision on how military and nonmilitary efforts intersected in war. The system was not without inefficiencies, but it provided a durable basis to coordinate civil and military operations.

Counterintuitively, the Bolsheviks' shared philosophy served as a more reliable foundation for unity of effort than the more tangible unity of command practiced by the imperial Russians. Russian unity of command allowed strong commanders, who enjoyed the right circumstances, to dictate military and nonmilitary operations, but its reliance upon the talents and political capital of a single commander made it vulnerable to the personal weakness of an Administrator-in-Chief or the whims of the Tsar and Saint Petersburg bureaucrats. In contrast, the shared Marxist ideology of the Bolsheviks provided a common framework for civil and military officials in both Central Asia and Moscow. The system was not perfect and did not always guarantee seamless coordination of military and nonmilitary operations, but it did provide a shared basis for common action throughout the struggle with the Basmachi insurgents.

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<sup>198</sup> Penati, 524-525.

<sup>199</sup> Baumann, 103-104.

In both case studies, the counterinsurgent forces defeated the insurgency and achieved their political goals; however, the Bolsheviks in Central Asia outperformed the imperial Russians in the Caucasus. The eventual imperial Russian success followed decades of failed policies while, following the brief missteps of the Tashkent Soviet, the Bolsheviks steadily improved their position in Central Asia. The Bolsheviks blended military and nonmilitary operations to isolate the insurgent from the population; first by conciliation and later by coercion. Furthermore, the measures that the Bolsheviks took to control the local population and defeat the Basmachis nested with their overall political objective to integrate Central Asia into the wider Soviet state. Conversely, the imperial Russians sacrificed time, blood, and treasure in a quixotic attempt to defeat the Caucasian insurgents in a decisive battle. Eventually, the Russians adopted a strategy that emphasized nonmilitary operations and population control to incrementally defeat the rebel mountaineers. In the Caucasian War and the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion, population-centric counterinsurgency principles contributed to Russian and Soviet victory; however, both conflicts demonstrated that success in population-centric counterinsurgency requires a vast commitment of time, resources, and political will.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

The imperial Russian and Bolshevik experiences in the Caucasian War and the Basmachi rebellion illustrates the strengths and risks of population-centric counterinsurgency. Many of the methods that the Russians and Soviets employed to influence and control the native population are, for good reason, unacceptable to the US Army. However, the case studies support the population-centric principle that a counterinsurgent force must isolate an insurgent group from its basis of support in a local population through a combination of mutually supporting military and nonmilitary operations to achieve victory.

Although the Caucasian War and the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion support current US counterinsurgency doctrine, it is important to identify certain aspects of imperial Russian and Bolshevik counterinsurgency operations that contributed to victory but that are highly unlikely to be utilized by the US Army. The Russians and the Bolsheviks both used a combination of conciliatory and coercive nonmilitary operations to control the population and isolate the insurgency. Moral and legal considerations bounds the US Army's ability to use coercive force on a civilian population. Instead, FM 3-24 focuses on influencing the local population through diverse political, economic, and humanitarian nonmilitary operations.<sup>200</sup> The unacceptability of coercive population control methods and tactics in US counterinsurgency doctrine does not necessarily weaken its viability, but it does underscore the fact that some options that were available acceptable to the Russians and Bolsheviks are not viable options for the US Army.

The second factor that differentiates the case studies from current and future US Army counterinsurgency operations is the location of the conflict. The imperial Russians and the Bolsheviks fought in territory that they sought to incorporate into their respective states. This fact gave the Russians and Soviets several advantages. It provided them with the long-term time

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<sup>200</sup> FM 3-24, 2-1-2-2.

horizon necessary to experiment and adjust their military and nonmilitary operations to effectively control and integrate the local population. It also removed the requirement to transition political and military control to a host nation government. The imperial Russians and Soviets both incorporated native leadership into their civil administration and military units; however, the central government never lost the ability to dictate civil and military operations or discipline uncooperative or corrupt native officials.<sup>201</sup> Finally, the imperial Russian and Bolshevik territorial claims in the Caucasus and Central Asia bolstered the political will to commit vast resources to the costly population-centric methods that secured victory over the Caucasian and Central Asian insurgents.

The territorial dynamics of the Caucasian War and the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion contrasts sharply with the operational context of probable future US Army counterinsurgency operations. FM 3-24 assumes that US counterinsurgency operations will take place on foreign soil. FM 3-24 additionally states that the primary objective of any counterinsurgency operation is to support and eventually transition all civil and military operations to a legitimate and viable host nation government.<sup>202</sup> The requirement to transition control to a host nation government inherently limits the US Army's flexibility by significantly reducing the time horizon of an operation and limiting its ability to influence the host nation's civil and military leaders. Contemporary US counterinsurgency operations attest to the difficulty of transitioning civil and military control to a host nation government without losing the hard-earned gains achieved prior to transition.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Baumann, 214.

<sup>202</sup> FM 3-24, 1-21.

The fact that future US counterinsurgency operations will almost certainly take place outside of sovereign US territory raises concerns over political will and accentuates the costs and risks associated with a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign. The Caucasian War and the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion demonstrated how costly population-centric counterinsurgency can be, and they also illustrated the risk of taking half measures and intervening into a society without committing sufficient resources to fully control the population and defeat the insurgency. States that intervene in a counterinsurgency as third parties often lose domestic support for the operation over time because interventions are costly and foreign insurgencies rarely pose an existential threat to the intervening country.<sup>204</sup> Therefore, the case studies indicate a serious risk in applying a population-centric approach to counterinsurgency operations in a foreign country. If the US Army employs population-centric counterinsurgency in a conflict where the United States lacks the political will to commit significant resources over a lengthy period of time, then the operation will likely be unsuccessful and may even embolden the insurgent movement by provoking popular outrage at intrusive nonmilitary operations designed to influence the local population.

The challenges associated with transitioning civil and military control to a host nation government combined with the costs and risks inherent in population-centric counterinsurgency may indicate that the US Army's counterinsurgency doctrine is flawed. Perhaps a more modest approach that minimizes intervention into a host nation's society and seeks to contain an insurgency without defeating it would be more suitable to many future US counterinsurgency

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<sup>203</sup> Azam Ahmed and Joseph Goldstein, "Taliban Gains Pull U.S. Units Back Into Fight in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, April 29, 2015, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/30/world/asia/more-aggressive-role-by-us-military-is-seen-in-afghanistan.html>; Peter Baker, "Relief Over U.S. Exit From Iraq Fades as Reality Overtakes Hope," *New York Times*, June 22, 2014, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/23/world/middleeast/relief-over-us-exit-from-iraq-fades-as-reality-overtakes-hope.html>.

<sup>204</sup> Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics*, vol. 27, no. 2 (January 1975): 175-200.

operations. The early stage of the Caucasian War indicates that such an approach may prove effective, but the contemporary security environment presents challenges that the Russian Empire did not face in the early nineteenth century.

Contemporary transnational terrorist organizations use ungoverned spaces as sanctuary to challenge regional stability and project attacks far outside of their safe-havens.<sup>205</sup> It is increasingly difficult to contain an insurgency to a geographic region, particularly if that insurgency supports or includes extremist elements who aim to export terrorism to the United States and its allies. The importance of bringing ungoverned spaces under the control of a legitimate government may require the defeat, rather than the containment, of an insurgency, and the case studies support the US doctrinal assertion that a population-centric approach is necessary to defeat an insurgent movement.

The analysis of the case studies includes important implications for synchronizing military and nonmilitary operations in US counterinsurgency operations. The institutionalism and complex bureaucracy of the US government makes achieving unity of command in any counterinsurgency operation unlikely. However, the case studies indicate that unity of effort can be achieved without unity of command. The Bolsheviks achieved unity of effort more readily than the imperial Russians even though the latter enjoyed unity of command more often. The Bolsheviks' shared ideology facilitated coordination across the civil-military divide and provided a basis for common action while Russian commanders who held titular authority over both military and civil forces often failed to practice actual authority over civil and military efforts. The case studies indicate that, despite the unlikelihood of unity of command, the US government can achieve unity of effort if a shared philosophy and vision is cultivated throughout the various agencies and entities involved in a counterinsurgency operation.

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<sup>205</sup> Angel Rabasa and John E. Peters, "Understanding Lack of Governance," in *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2007), 1-2.

The analysis of the Caucasian War and the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion provide several insights into the population-centric theory that informs US Army counterinsurgency doctrine. The analysis of the two conflicts supports the population-centric principle that synchronizing military and nonmilitary operations to isolate the insurgency from the local population plays a critical role in counterinsurgent victory. However, the case studies also demonstrate the high cost of population-centric counterinsurgency and the risks involved in pursuing a population-centric approach without the resources or political will necessary to bear those costs. The imperial Russian and Bolshevik experiences in the Caucasian War and the suppression of the Basmachi rebellion supports the efficacy US Army counterinsurgency doctrine, but they also demonstrate the costs and risks associated with population-centric counterinsurgency. The case studies suggest that a population-centric approach to counterinsurgency can be effective, but only if the counterinsurgent force is prepared to commit significant time, energy and resources to the cause.

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